NATION

India's 1st fast-breeder reactor to be commissioned in 2026

≫ Page: 4 ≪

BUSINESS

RBI to stay agile, proactive: Guv Malhotra

≫ Page: 7 ≪

SPORTS

Pakistan team won't travel to India for ICC women's ODI World Cup

≫ Page: 8 ≪

www.twitter.com/EnglishSalar
www.facebook.com/EnglishSalar
www.instagram.com/dailysalarenglish
youtube.com/@dailysalardigital

SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

Website: salarnews.in | www.magzter.com | 20 APRIL 2025 | SUNDAY | BENGALURU | 21 SHAWWAL, 1446 AH | Vol 4 | Issue No 106 | Pages: 8

India tears into Bangladesh's govt over Hindu leader's killing

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

India on Saturday condemned the alleged abduction and killing of a Hindu minority leader in Bangladesh and called on the interim government in Dhaka to live up to its responsibility of protecting the minorities.

In a social media post, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the "brutal killing" of Bhabesh Chandra Roy follows a "pattern of systematic persecution" of Hindu minorities in Bangladesh.

"We have noted with distress the abduction and brutal killing of Shri Bhabesh Chandra Roy, a Hindu minority leader in Bangladesh," he said.

"We condemn this incident and once again remind the interim government to live up to its responsibility of protecting all minorities, including Hindus, without inventing excuses or making distinctions," he added.

Roy, 58, was kidnapped from his home in Basudebpur village in Dinajpur district - located about 330 kilometres northwest of Dhaka -and later found dead. According to local media reports citing police and family members, Mr Roy received a phone call around 4:30 pm on Wednesday, believed to be from the men who would later attack him.

According to a The Daily Star report, roughly thirty minutes after the call, four individuals arrived at Mr Roy's home on two motorcycles. They reportedly kidnapped him and took him to Narabari village, where he was assaulted. Family members told The Daily Star that Mr Roy was returned to his home in an unconscious state. He was transported to a hospital in Dinajpur, where he was declared dead on arrival.

There has been a sharp downturn in India-Bangladesh relations after deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina fled Dhaka in August last year in the face of a massive anti-government protest. —*PTI*

TERROR THREAT: US ISSUES TRAVEL ADVISORY FOR BANGLADESH

The United States has issued a stricter travel advisory for Bangladesh, urging citizens to reconsider travel due to terrorism, crime, and ongoing civil unrest. The country is now under a Level 3 alert, with parts of the Chittagong Hill Tracts – Khagrachari, Rangamati, and Bandarban – classified as Level 4 'Do Not Travel' zones owing to communal violence, kidnappings, and terrorist threats. The advisory highlights recent kidnappings, including incidents targeting religious minorities, as well as risks from separatist groups and political violence. There have also been reports of IED explosions and shootings. The US has limited non-essential travel for its staff outside the diplomatic enclave in Dhaka.

PUTIN ANNOUNCES 'EASTER TRUCE' IN UKRAINE WAR

Russia, Ukraine swap hundreds of prisoners in largest exchange

MOSCOW, 19 APRIL

Russian President Vladimir Putin announced a temporary Easter ceasefire in Ukraine starting Saturday evening, citing humanitarian grounds. The truce, set to begin at 6 pmMoscow time and last until midnight following Easter Sunday, coincided with the largest prisoner-of-war exchange since the full-scale invasion began over three years ago.

"We assume that Ukraine will reciprocate," Putin said during a meeting with Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov. "However, our troops must remain alert to provocations and violations."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy dismissed the ceasefire as "another attempt by Putin to play with human lives," citing ongoing drone attacks and air raid sirens.

The short-term ceasefire proposal from Russia comes as President Donald Trump has been pressing both Moscow and Kyiv to agree a truce, but has failed to extract any major concessions from the Kremlin.

In a major prisoner swap, Russia's Ministry of Defence confirmed the return of 246 Russian soldiers. In exchange, Ukraine received 277 soldiers, including 31 wounded troops transferred as a humanitarian gesture. The United Arab Emirates was thanked by both sides for mediating the exchange.

> **This is another attempt by Putin to play with human lives. The air raid alerts are spreading across Ukraine and Shahed drones in our skies reveal Putin's true attitude toward Easter and toward human life**
>
> — Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukraine President

The ceasefire announcement follows comments from US President Donald Trump, who said negotiations between Russia and Ukraine are "coming to a head." Secretary of State Marco Rubio warned that the US may withdraw support if no progress is made soon.

Meanwhile, Russia claimed near-complete control over the Kursk region following Ukrainian incursions last year. Gerasimov reported to Putin that 99.5% of the area, including 1,260 sq. km, has been retaken, though fighting continues in Gornal village.

Zelenskyy maintained that Ukrainian troops are still holding positions within Kursk.

Overnight, Russia launched 87 drones and decoys across Ukraine. Ukraine's air force said it intercepted 33 and jammed another 36. Explosions damaged farms in the Odesa region and sparked fires in Sumy, though no casualties were reported. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 6

Elon Musk to visit India later this year

WASHINGTON,19 APRIL

Elon Musk, CEO of Tesla and SpaceX, announced on Saturday that he is looking forward to visiting India later this year. His statement followed a conversation with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during which they discussed opportunities for collaboration in technology and innovation. Musk posted on X, calling it an honour to speak with Modi. The Indian Prime Minister also shared the news, highlighting their discussion and reaffirming India's commitment to strengthening its technological partnerships with the United States. Musk's visit is expected to further developments such as Tesla's potential entry into the Indian market and broader cooperation in advanced tech sectors. His growing global influence continues to shape conversations around innovation, sustainability, and future-forward industries. —*PTI*

Modi to visit Saudi Arabia next week

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will begin a two-day visit to Saudi Arabia on Tuesday to strengthen ties in energy, trade, and defence. According to the Ministry of External Affairs, the upcoming 22-23 April visit will be the first visit of the Prime Minister to the country in his third term. The visit includes high-level talks with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud, during which several bilateral agreements are expected to be signed. Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said the visit aims to enhance the already strong strategic partnership between the two nations. A key focus will be on adding a strategic dimension to energy cooperation, reflecting the growing importance of India-Saudi relations. The trip is seen as a step toward deepening collaboration in areas vital to both countries' economic and security interests.—*PTI*

Indian student killed by stray bullet in Canada

NEW YORK, 19 APRIL

A 21-year-old Indian student was killed in Canada after she was struck by a stray bullet as she was waiting at a bus stop on her way to work and shots were fired by a car occupant. According to local police Harsimrat Randhawa, a student at Mohawk College in Hamilton, Ontario was an innocent victim, fatally struck by a stray bullet during a shooting incident involving two vehicles. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 6

PARENTS TO BEAR BURDEN

K'taka textbooks to be pricier by 10%

BENGALURU, 19 APRIL

- Sources said the Society had accepted indents from private schools in December 2024 and collected advance payments based on the then-existing rates.

After recent hikes in milk, water, and electricity tariffs, families in Karnataka are now staring at another increase—this time in school textbook prices. The Karnataka Textbook Society has confirmed that textbook prices for private schools will go up by around 10 per cent this academic year.

Sources said the Society had accepted indents from private schools in December 2024 and collected advance payments based on the then-existing rates. However, with revised pricing now in place, parents will have to absorb the additional cost.

Shashi Kumar D, General Secretary of the Karnataka Association of Management Schools (KAMS), said the hike is not uniform. "Some textbooks have seen prices jump by up to 100%," he told Salar News. "Private schools will have to pass on this burden to parents, either through the annual fee or by charging separately."

The timing of the price hike, amid rising living costs, has sparked concern. "We've urged the government to step in and ease the pressure on families," Kumar said. "But with no action so far, schools have no option but to revise prices."

Already reeling from increased expenses, citizens now face yet another financial strain—this time in the name of their children's education. — *Salar News*

SC incites religious wars: Nishikant Dubey

NEW DELHI, 19 APR

BJP MP Nishikant Dubey on Saturday accused the Supreme Court of inciting religious wars in the country.

"The Supreme Court is going beyond its limits," Dubey told news agency ANI.

The fourth-term BJP MP said Parliament and state assemblies should be closed down if the apex court has to make the laws.

He accused the court of arrogating to itself Parliament's legislative powers by striking down laws passed by the legislature and even giving directions to the President who, Dubey noted, is the appointing authority of Supreme Court judges.

His comment came following the Centre's assurance to the court that it would not be implementing some of the contentious provisions of the Waqf (Amendment) Act till the next day of hearing after the court raised questions over them.

The court can order the government but not Parliament, he asserted.

The comments follow Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar's "Article 142 has become a nuclear missile against democratic forces, available to judiciary 24x7" comments. The Vice President made the comments after a Supreme Court judgment effectively laid down a deadline for the President and Governors to clear Bills. —*PTI*

Delhi: 11 dead, as many hurt in multi-storey building collapse

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

An early morning building collapse in the Shakti Vihar area of northeast Delhi has resulted in the deaths of 11 people, with 11 others injured. Emergency services, including the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), fire services, and Delhi Police, conducted rescue operations for over 12 hours at the site of the four-storey structure, which was built 20 years ago and collapsed around 3am.

Police reported that 22 individuals were present in the building at the time of the collapse. Among the deceased are the owner, Tehseen (60), and six members of his family, including his wife and three young children. The cause of the collapse may be linked to ongoing construction work on the ground floor, which locals believe compromised the building's integrity. Residents also raised concerns about the condition of adjacent buildings, with sewage seepage reportedly weakening their structure over time. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 4

Rescue operation underway after collapse of a building in Mustafabad area in New Delhi on Saturday ***PHOTO: PTI***

Son of late don Muthappa Rai shot at in Bidadi

BENGALURU, 19 APRIL

Ricky Rai, the son of late underworld don N Muthappa Rai was allegedly shot at by unidentified assailants near his residence in Bidadi area of Ramanagara on late Friday night

An FIR was registered against four individuals. Based on a complaint filed by his driver Basavaraju, police have named Muthappa Rai's second wife, Anuradha, and three others Rakesh Malli, Nithesh Shetty, and Vaidyanathan as suspects in the FIR registered under the (BNS) Sections 109, 3(5), and under the Arms Act. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 2

4 WILL ARRIVE BY MAY

Eight cheetahs to be brought to India from Botswana

BHOPAL, 19 APRIL

Eight cheetahs will be brought to India in two phases, including four from Botswana in southern Africa by May, National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) officials have said.

Union Minister for Environment, Forests and Climate Change Bhupender Yadav and Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav held a review meeting on the cheetah project with NTCA officials here on 18 April.

"Efforts are underway to bring more cheetahs from South Africa, Botswana, and Kenya to India. Eight cheetahs will be brought to India in two phases, of which four will arrive from Botswana by May. After this, four more cheetahs will be brought. Consent is being developed on an agreement between India and Kenya," said an NTCA official.

Over Rs 112 crore has been spent on the cheetah project in the country so far, of which 67 per cent has gone into cheetah rehabilitation in Madhya Pradesh.

Cheetahs at the Kuno National Park in Sheopur district, MP. ***PHOTO: PTI***

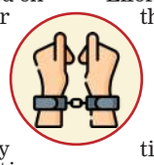
Under the project, cheetahs will be relocated in a phased manner in the Gandhi Sagar Sanctuary, situated along the Madhya Pradesh-Rajasthan inter-state border. The two states have agreed to establish an inter-state cheetah conservation area. The Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh has 26 cheetahs, including 14 new born cubs. The state government also filed a petition in the Supreme Court seeking permission to start cheetah safari in Kuno. —*PTI*

3 booked for protest against Waqf Act in Mangaluru

KOCHI, 19 APRIL

Mangaluru, 19 April

Three people who were part of a protest against Waqf Amendment Act organised on Saturday were booked for allegedly disrupting traffic and obstructing emergency services along NH 75 near Adyar here, police said.



The protest organised by Ulema Coordination Committee Karnataka was held at Shah Garden.

According to the Mangaluru City Police, while the event began peacefully under tight security arrangements, a section of protesters later moved towards the national highway and blocked traffic around 4.30 pm.

Efforts were made to disperse the crowd, but some protesters ignored the warnings and engaged in unlawful activities, police alleged. Based on visual evidence and initial analysis of video footage, three individuals have been identified as the key accused—Jaleel, a resident of Krishnapura; Fazal from Valachil; and Mohammed Hanif Noufal. —*PTI*

PHOTO: xxx

Archbishop calls for peace, unity in Easter greetings

BENGALURU, 19 APRIL

In a heartfelt Easter message, Archbishop of Bengaluru Peter Machado called upon people of all faiths to embrace the spirit of peace, reconciliation, and compassion that Easter represents. "Easter is not merely a historical event, but a profound spiritual reality that inspires faith, courage, and transformation," the Archbishop said. Describing Easter as a call to rise above conflict and suffering, Machado urged society to recommit to values such as love, justice, and solidarity. It invites us to be agents of harmony, to forgive, and to build bridges of understanding," he said. Extending his blessings across Karnataka and India, he wished all people—regardless of religion—a season filled with grace, strength and joy.—*Salar News*

Govt bus driver attempts suicide in Chikmagaluru depot

KADUR, 19 APRIL

Failing to handle alleged harassment by his senior officers, a government bus driver tried to kill himself by consuming poison at the bus depot in Chikmagaluru's Kadur on Saturday. The driver, who has been admitted to the government hospital in Shivamogga, has left a 'death note' alleging that ATS Puttaswamaiah was harassing him by not granting him leave. He said that he had pending days of leave but the office granted the same to those who paid them money. —*Salar News*

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support.

7-member cabinet panel to look into BMIC project

BENGALURU, 19 APRIL

The government has constituted a seven-member cabinet sub-committee headed by Home Minister G Parameshwara to review the progress made so far in the implementation of the Bengaluru-Mysuru Infrastructure Corridor (BMIC) project, and to make appropriate recommendations regarding the steps to be taken in the future. The other members of the committee are Ministers -- H K Patil, KH Muniyappa, MB Patil, HC Mahadevappa, Satish Jarkiholi, and Krishna Byre Gowda. The cabinet last week had authorised Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to constitute the sub-committee. "This Cabinet Sub-Committee shall consult with legal experts and subject matter experts and submit its report within 2 months on the action to be taken legally," an official note said, adding that the Public Works Department shall provide necessary assistance to the committee. Nandi Infrastructure Corridor Enterprise has been accused of violating the framework agreement with the government. —*Salar News*

Caste census report is most scientific: Parameshwara

His remarks come as communities call the survey unscientific

BENGALURU, 19 APRIL

Terming the caste census as one that can be classified as one of the most scientific exercises, Home Minister G Parameshwara on Saturday said the Cabinet will take a decision on its implementation after hearing the opinion of all ministers.

His comments come amidst opposition to the survey report from various sections of the society calling it "unscientific". They have demanded that it be rejected, and a fresh survey be conducted.

A special cabinet meeting convened to deliberate on the caste census report on Thursday had ended inconclusive, reportedly amid internal differences within the government.

The cabinet is scheduled to take up the matter again on 2 May.

"All ministers have been asked to share their opinion, some of us have participated in the discussion during the cabinet, the discussion will continue, everyone will share their opinion. After hearing everyone's opinion the cabinet will take a decision. It is going to be a cabinet decision, not individuals or the Chief Minister's," Parameshwara said.

Parameshwara *PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA*

Speaking to reporters here, he said, some communities have expressed concern that their population strength has been shown less in the survey.

- Parameshwara said, the survey has gone to the extent of gathering information whether the borewell dug by a person was successful with adequate amount of water or whether it turned out to be dry.

Stating that after studying the survey, he feels that this is one of the "most scientific" exercise, Parameshwara said, the survey has gone to the extent of gathering information whether the borewell dug by a person was successful with adequate amount of water or whether it turned out to be dry.

"Signatures have been taken after gathering data from every household and supervisor's signatures are also there," he added. —*PTI*

CM backs RaGa's call, vows 'Rohith Vemula Act' in State

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's call for legislative action to end caste-based discrimination in education received swift support from Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. The Chief Minister, in reply to Rahul's letter, said that he has instructed his legal advisor and team to prepare a draft of Rohit Vemula Act, a legislation that will act as a deterrent against discrimination in educational institutions.—*Salar News*

2ND WIFE AMONG SUSPECTS

Ricky Rai (inset) was allegedly shot at by assailants near his residence in Bidadi area of Ramanagara on late Friday night *PHOTO: SALAR*

Son of late don Muthappa Rai shot at in Bidadi

BENGALURU, 19 APRIL

Ricky Rai, the son of late underworld don N Muthappa Rai was allegedly shot at by unidentified assailants near his residence in Bidadi area of Ramanagara on late Friday night

An FIR was registered against four individuals. Based on a complaint filed by his driver Basavaraju, police have named Muthappa Rai's second wife, Anuradha, and three others Rakesh Malli, Nithesh Shetty, and Vaidyanathan as suspects in the FIR registered under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) Sections 109, 3(5), and under the Arms Act.

According to Basavaraju, Ricky had expressed concerns about threats to his life and had previously mentioned surviving multiple murder conspiracies. On the night of the attack, Ricky was travelling with his driver and a security guard when their vehicle came under fire just outside their Bidadi residence. As per the police, two rounds were fired at their car; one bullet struck Ricky's hand and another hit his nose, causing serious injuries. He is currently undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Bengaluru.

Scene of Crime Officers (SOCO) have collected two 70mm bullets from the crime scene during the inspection.

Basavaraju, who narrowly escaped the bullets by ducking, told police that the assailants appeared to be lying in wait, and the attack was swift and targeted. Police believe Ricky's survival was due to a change in routine—he was seated in the rear seat instead of driving, as he usually does.

- Basavaraju, who narrowly escaped the bullets by ducking, told police that the assailants appeared to be lying in wait, and the attack was swift and targeted. Police believe Ricky's survival was due to a change in routine—he was seated in the rear seat instead of driving, as he usually does.

Police form special teams, SP leads probe

Ramanagara Superintendent of Police, Srinivas Gowda, who is heading the investigation, told Salar News on Saturday, "The assailants fired at close range. Preliminary reports suggest two rounds were discharged, but we are verifying. Multiple angles, including real estate disputes and personal enmity, are being investigated."

Four special teams have been formed to track the accused. Investigators are probing whether the attack was triggered by old rivalries or linked to Ricky Rai's real estate dealings. The Forensic Science Laboratory and SOCO teams have also joined the probe.

The dramatic attempt on Ricky's life has revived memories of his father's tumultuous past in Bengaluru's underworld. —*Salar News*

2 home guards fired over CET sacred thread row

SHIVAMOGGA, 19 APRIL

A case has been registered against the officials at Adichunchanagiri PU College, a CET exam centre, for allegedly asking students to remove their Janivaras – the sacred thread worn by Brahmins – before entering the examination hall, police said on Saturday.

Two home guards deployed at the exam centre, who asked the students to remove the sacred thread, have been suspended in this connection, officials said.

The case was registered following a complaint by Natraj Bhagavath, from the Karnataka Brahmin Sabha, on Friday.

According to police, the FIR includes sections 115 (2) (voluntarily causing hurt), 299 (Deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs), 351 (1) (criminal intimidation), 352 (Intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of peace) and 3(5) (Common Intention) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

Common Entrance Test is held to select students for admission into professional courses *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

The complainant alleged that despite bringing the incident to the notice of the district administration no legal action was taken against the officials involved and that asking students to remove 'Janivaras' before entering the examination hall has hurt the sentiments of the students as well as the community.

Two home guards were suspended by Shivamogga Deputy Commissioner Gurudatta Hegde following instructions from the district-in-charge minister Madhu Bangarappa and a report has been submitted to the Karnataka Examinations Authority, which conducts the CET.

The incident has sparked a controversy following which the State's Higher Education Minister M C Sudhakar assured action against those responsible.

Common Entrance Test (CET) is held to select students for admission into professional courses.

On Wednesday, three students were allegedly asked to remove their 'Janivaras' by the security staff at the Adichunchanagiri PU college exam centre, police said. —*PTI*

Tension in Mysuru after Ambedkar flexes vandalised

MYSURU, 19 APRIL

Tension gripped Vajamangala village in Mysuru taluk—part of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's Varuna constituency—on Saturday morning after miscreants vandalised and desecrated flex banners of Dr B R Ambedkar and Bhagawan Buddha.

The banners, installed by Siddartha Yuvakara Balaga at Vajamangala Circle as part of Ambedkar Jayanthi celebrations on 14 April, were found torn and defaced with human excrement. The act sparked outrage among villagers and members of the Balaga, who staged a snap protest demanding the immediate arrest of those responsible.

Over 400 villagers gathered at the site, prompting swift police action. Police assured the villagers of strict action and have recovered CCTV footage showing three bike-borne youths suspected to be involved in the incident. Dalit Sangharsha Samiti leader Ahinda Javarappa condemned the incident and demanded swift arrests. Security has been tightened in Vajamangala to prevent unrest. —*Salar News*

Panic as chariot collapses during temple festival in Dakshina Kannada

The top portion of chariot collapses during the annual Rathotsava (chariot festival) at the Bappanadu Shri Durgaparameshwari Temple, in Mulki near Mangaluru *PHOTO: PTI*

MANGALURU, 19 APRIL

A chariot used during the annual fair at the historic Bappanadu Sri Durgaparameshwari Temple in Dakshina Kannada district, collapsed in the early hours of Saturday. However, no injuries were reported, officials said.

The incident occurred at around 2 am during the Brahmarathotsava, a major ritual involving the ceremonial pulling of the temple chariot at Mulki town in the district.

The upper portion of the Brahma Ratha (grand chariot) reportedly collapsed while several devotees and temple priests were near it. According to officials, no one was harmed and rituals resumed shortly after the idol of the deity was transferred to the Chandramandala Ratha (a smaller ceremonial chariot).

- The Shayanotsava, a ritual symbolises the goddess reclining on a bed of jasmine flowers, for which 1.5 lakh garlands made of jasmine flowers were offered by devotees, a record of sorts.

Mulki Police and temple trust have initiated a probe. At the time of the accident, 250 devotees were pulling the chariot in presence of around 5,000 people.

The incident caused flutter among devotees and the temple administration, given the prominence of the Bappanadu fair in the cultural and religious life of coastal Karnataka. The Shayanotsava, a ritual symbolises the goddess reclining on a bed of jasmine flowers, for which 1.5 lakh garlands made of jasmine flowers were offered by devotees, a record of sorts. —*PTI*

WIFE, LOVER STRANGLE SUSPICIOUS HUSBAND OVER LOVE AFFAIR

MYSURU, 19 APRIL

A woman and her lover allegedly murdered her husband after he opposed their extramarital affair in Mysuru's Kakarawadi area. The victim, Mohammed Shafi, 35, was strangled with a mobile charger wire while he was asleep on Thursday night.

Shabreen Taz, 28, the wife of the deceased, had developed a relationship with Anwar, an autorickshaw driver who regularly picked her up and dropped her to her workplace at a garment factory. Married to Shafi for 12 years, Shabreen was the mother of two children. Shafi had grown suspicious of the affair and reportedly quarreled with her several times over it.

Unable to tolerate the pressure, Shabreen and Anwar allegedly hatched a plan to eliminate him. On Thursday night, they carried out the murder at their home while Shafi was asleep.

The crime came to light on Friday when Shafi's relatives noticed suspicious marks on his neck and informed the police. Acting on the complaint, Krishnaraja Police launched an investigation and arrested the duo on Saturday. —*Salar News*

Father, daughter killed after truck falls on bike

CHIKKABALLAPUR, 19 APRIL

An accident near Lingasettypura Gate in Chikkaballapur taluk claimed the lives of a father and his four-year-old daughter on Saturday. Venkatesh, 30, and his daughter Deeksha, residents of Bandahalli village, died on the spot when a speeding container truck overturned and fell on their two-wheeler around 6 PM. Venkatesh's wife Roopa, sustained serious injuries and was shifted to a hospital in Bengaluru. The container, reportedly en route to Hyderabad, was entering the Bengaluru-Bellary National Highway when the incident occurred. Eyewitnesses said the vehicle was speeding. Villagers have demanded the construction of proper service roads near villages to ensure safer movement along the highway. —*Salar News*

Police urge public to report auto harassment via helplines

BENGALURU, 19 APRIL

Amid rising complaints about autorickshaw drivers in the City, Bengaluru police have urged citizens—especially women and out-of-state visitors—to report incidents of harassment, overcharging, or misbehaviour using official helplines.

The appeal follows a string of troubling cases reported this month. In one instance, a driver was arrested for harassing a woman outside a shop by demanding her phone number and forcing a selfie. In another, a man was allegedly threatened by a group of auto drivers near Rajarajeshwari Nagar metro station for booking a Rapido ride. On 4 April, a driver was arrested for allegedly raping a 19-year-old woman near KR Puram railway station.

Police have also arrested several drivers involved in violent assault cases across the city.

"These are serious offences," said Police Commissioner B. Dayananda. "We urge the public to report such behaviour. Strict action will be taken."

With over 2.76 lakh autos in Bengaluru, complaints about overcharging and misconduct remain high. The Transport Department confirmed over 3,000 cases of excess fare collection in 2024, with fines exceeding Rs 15.87 lakh.

Joint Commissioner (Traffic) MN Anucheth added, "Avoid arguments on the street. Report details via helplines—we will act promptly."

Incidents can be reported by calling 080-22868550, 080-22868444, or by emailing automationpubbcp@ksp.gov.in. —*Salar News*

'CAN'T HANDLE CRITICISM?'

BBMP blocks citizens on X over pothole plaints

BENGALURU, 19 APRIL

The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) is facing backlash after several citizens alleged that its IT Cell blocked users on X (formerly Twitter) for posting complaints about potholes and illegal garbage dumping.

The issue came to light when a user, Neethu, tagged BBMP's official handle with photos of damaged roads, requesting repairs. Instead of receiving a response, she discovered her account had been blocked. Similar incidents have since emerged, sparking widespread criticism from netizens.

"First they ignore complaints, now they block those who speak up. Is this how civic issues are handled?" one user asked. The move has been widely condemned as lacking transparency and accountability.

- So far, BBMP has not released an official statement. However, mounting public pressure is forcing the civic body's IT Cell to respond.

Ironically, this comes even as Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar and BBMP Commissioner Tushar Girinath have urged the public to report civic problems through social media.

"If raising concerns gets you blocked, what's the point of public engagement?" another user questioned. "BBMP should be fixing roads, not filters on its timeline." So far, BBMP has not released an official statement. However, mounting public pressure is forcing the civic body's IT Cell to respond. —*Salar News*

@BBMPofficial has blocked you
You can view public posts from @BBMPofficial, but you are blocked from engaging with them. You also cannot follow or message @BBMPofficial.
Bruhat Bengaluru Mahan... · 5h
ಬಿಬಿಎಂಪಿ ಕೇಂದ್ರ ಕಚೇರಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಭಾರತ ರತ್ನ ಡಾ. ಬಿ. ಆರ್. ಅಂಬೇಡ್ಕರ್ ಜಯಂತಿಯನ್ನು ಆಚರಿಸಿದ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ದಿನ ಪತ್ರಿಕೆಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಪ್ರಕಟವಾದ ವರದಿಗಳು.

The issue came to light when a user, Neethu, tagged BBMP's official handle with photos of damaged roads, requesting repairs. *PHOTO: xxx*

Sambhal CO given clean chit over Holi-Eid remark

LUCKNOW, 19 APRIL

Sambhal Circle Officer (CO) Anuj Chaudhary has been given a clean chit over his remarks comparing Holi and Jumma namaz. Ahead of Holi, he stated that while Friday prayers occur weekly, Holi is annual, urging mutual respect and advising those uncomfortable with colours to stay indoors. His comments drew criticism, prompting a complaint by ex-IPS officer Amitabh Thakur. Although the probe included statements from Chaudhary and two witnesses, Thakur claimed his own statement was not recorded and he was denied the chance to submit evidence. He has called for a fresh investigation. Sambhal had witnessed communal tensions in November. *—PTI*

Naveen Patnaik re-elected as BJD chief for 9th term

BHUBANESWAR, 19 APRIL

Former Chief Minister of Odisha, Naveen Patnaik, was re-elected as the president of the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) for an unprecedented ninth consecutive term during a state council meeting at the party's headquarters, Sankha Bhawan. Patnaik, who was the sole candidate for the position, addressed party members following the announcement, urging them to counter the "false narrative" propagated by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). "We conceded defeat in the last assembly election by a narrow margin despite receiving more votes because we failed to effectively challenge this narrative. We must be aggressive in addressing this, especially on social media," he stated. Highlighting the importance of technology in communicating with the public, Patnaik underscored the need to enhance the BJD's social media presence. *—PTI*

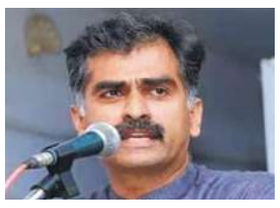


PHOTO: PTI

MDMK leader Durai Vaiko quits post over internal fights

CHENNAI, 19 APRIL

MDMK leader and its founder Vaiko's son, Durai Vaiko on Saturday quit as the party's principal secretary, in an apparent fallout of internal squabbles. Vaiko, Lok Sabha MP from Tiruchirappalli in the state, took to X to announce his decision and blamed an individual as the reason for his stepping down. After he was elected as headquarters secretary earlier, one person who could not tolerate that has been for the last four years making accusations against the party and its leadership, Durai said. Without naming the individual, he also accused that person of continuously feeding the media, information that brought 'disrepute' to Vaiko. "I don't want to continue working as the principal secretary amid such a person At the same time, I would continue to work for the MDMK as its primary worker," he said. *—PTI*

Karni Sena activist held for threats against SP leaders

ALIGARH, 19 APRIL

Police in Aligarh have arrested Karni Sena activist Mohan Chauhan for making inflammatory remarks and issuing threats against Samajwadi Party (SP) leaders. Chauhan was detained from his residence under the Jawan police station area on Friday night, following a complaint by SP district president Laxmi Dhangar. A video circulating online showed Chauhan threatening SP MP Ramji Lal Suman, against whom he had earlier announced a Rs 25 lakh bounty, and using provocative language against SP chief Akhilesh Yadav. Chauhan has over six cases registered against him since 2016. Aarti Singh, SP Mahila Sabha chief in Aligarh, had also filed a complaint against him. *—PTI*

NCW delegation meets riot-hit people in WB

NCW chief says the situation is distressing; TMC questions their motives, calls them a BJP wing

KOLKATA, 19 APRIL

A delegation of the National Commission for Women (NCW), led by chairperson Vijaya Rahatkar, continued their interactions with riot-hit people in West Bengal's Murshidabad district on Saturday. While the delegation assured them that the Centre would take necessary steps to ensure their safety the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) questioned the NCW's neutrality, accusing it of functioning as a "political wing of the BJP".

"The situation is extremely distressing. We can feel their pain and sufferings," Rahatkar said.

NCW member Archana Majumdar said that the Commission would report the women's demands to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, especially regarding the deployment of BSF camps.

Slamming the NCW's visit, the TMC questioned the commission's neutrality and political motivations.

"What Modi's PR agency won't tell you is that this Majumdar contested the 2021 Bengal elections on a BJP ticket and lost. She's an active card-carrying BJP worker," TMC Rajya Sabha MP Saket Gokhale said. "NCW has long been a political wing of the BJP."

TMC state General Secretary Kunal Ghosh drew parallels to previous NCW visits to the state, particularly to Sandeshkhali.

"When NCW visited Sandeshkhali the last time, propaganda and misinformation began. The then-NCW chief Rekha Sharma and her team had designed anti-Bengal narratives to defame the state in multiple ways."

Last year, residents of Sandeshkhali had raised concerns over how the commission and the local BJP unit collected signatures on blank papers that were later used to file fabricated rape complaints, he said. *—PTI*

National Commission for Women (NCW) Chairman Vijaya Rahatkar and other officials during a meeting with riot-affected people, in Murshidabad district, West Bengal, on Saturday. PHOTO: PTI

> **Why aren't they going to states other than Bengal? Where are they when there are atrocities against women in Manipur, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh? They have come on a political assignment here**
>
> -Kunal Ghosh, TMC General Secretary

> **It (West Bengal government) turned the relief camps into detention camps. It prevented the refugees from communicating with the media, representatives of voluntary organizations or anyone outside. It fed the homeless Hindus unpalatable food of rice filled with pebbles and vegetables with insects**
>
> -Suvendu Adhikari, BJP leader

VHP demand President's Rule in WB

New Delhi/Kolkata, 19 April

The Vishva Hindu Parishad on Saturday staged protests in different parts of the country against the recent communal violence in West Bengal's Murshidabad over the amendments made to the Waqf Bill, and demanded the immediate imposition of President's Rule in the state. The protests were held in Murshidabad, Delhi and Noida, among other places, with VHP members claiming a complete breakdown of law and order in the Mamata Banerjee-ruled state. *—PTI*

Raj and Uddhav spark reunion buzz

MUMBAI, 19 APRIL

MNS leader Raj Thackeray has sparked speculation about a potential political rapprochement with his estranged cousin and Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray, noting their past differences are "trivial" and uniting for the greater good of "Marathi manoos" is not a difficult task.

The buzz strengthened when Uddhav on Saturday said he is ready to put aside trivial fights provided that those working against Maharashtra's interests will not be entertained, a veiled reference to Raj hosting Shiv Sena head and Deputy CM Eknath Shinde at his residence.

In an interview with actor-director Mahesh Manjrekar's podcast, released on Saturday, Raj said he had no issues working with Uddhav when they were in the undivided Shiv Sena. Raj said the question is, does Uddhav want to work with him?

- In seperate instance, cousins Raj and Uddhav Thackeray said they were willing to let go of minor differences for the greater good. Raj said it was a question of desire

"For a bigger cause, our fights and issues are trivial. Maharashtra is very big. For Maharashtra, the existence of Marathi manoos, these fights are very trivial. I don't think it is a difficult task to come together and stay united. But the issue is of desire."

Uddhav meanwhile said had the MNS president opposed Maharashtra's investments and businesses moving to Gujarat, then a government that takes care of the interests of the state would have been formed in Delhi and Maharashtra.

"It cannot happen that you support the BJP during Lok Sabha polls, then oppose during the state assembly polls and again compromise. First decide that whoever works against the interests of Maharashtra will not be welcomed at home, you will not go to their homes and break bread," Uddhav said. He added he was ready to set aside minor disagreements.

"I am saying I don't have fights with anyone, and if any, I am resolving them. But then all Marathi people should decide whether they will go with the BJP or with me," Uddhav added. *—PTI*

WILL NOT ALLOW HINDI IMPOSITION: UDDHAV, SULE

MUMBAI, 19 APRIL

Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray and NCP (SP) leader Supriya Sule on Saturday opposed the BJP lead state government's move to make Hindi compulsory for Primary students.

Addressing an event of the Bharatiya Kamgar Sena, the workers' wing of the Shiv Sena (UBT), Thackeray said his party will not allow Hindi to be imposed in the state.

"We will do everything if you ask (us) with affection, but if you impose anything, we will oppose it. Why this push for (learning) Hindi?" he said.

Meanwhile, Sule speaking to reporters in Pune said if National Educational Programme was implemented at cost to Marathi language it will not be tolerated.

"Making anything mandatory is not appropriate. Marathi is the mother tongue of residents of the state and should remain the first language," she said. *—PTI*

Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi PHOTO: PTI

Cong top brass meet to discuss ED chargesheet

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

Top Congress leaders met on Saturday to form a strategy against National Herald case against the former party chiefs Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge attended the meeting of party general secretaries and in-charges of various states to and chalk out the party's future course of action, sources said.

"The BJP leaders are misleading the people by lying. We have to tell the truth to the public," Kharge said. The Congress chief also said that it cannot be a mere coincidence that on one hand the AICC session is being held in Ahmedabad, and immediately after that such a big action is being taken by the ED.

He claimed that when the Congress plenary was held in Raipur, "Prime Minister Narendra Modi got our leaders raided using the ED and the CBI to make it fail".

He said the Prime Minister's intention was to prevent the session from taking place.

"Our accounts were closed before the (2024) Lok Sabha elections, yet the people doubled our numbers in the Lower House," he noted. *—PTI*

Rana Pratap, Shivaji are national heroes, not Aurangzeb: Rajnath

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR/ LUCKNOW, 19 APRIL

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has said Maharana Pratap and Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj are national heroes and not the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb.

Speaking at a function after unveiling a life-size statue of the Mewar ruler at Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar in Maharashtra on Friday, Singh called for renaming Aurangabad as Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar and the Aurangzeb Road in Delhi as APJ Abdul Kalam Road.

He claimed that post-Independence historians with Left leanings eulogised Aurangazeb but did not give due credit to Rana Pratap and Shivaji Maharaj who played a unifying role in all sections of society and said those who glorified Aurangazeb insulted India's muslims.

Union Minister Rajnath Singh being received by Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnavis in Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar PHOTO: PTI

Later, speaking at the KD Singh Babu stadium in Uttar Pradesh, he said Lucknow, which hosted the first National Games in free India, should hold the upcoming edition. *—PTI*

Nitish institutionalised corruption: Tejashwi

PATNA/ NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

Opposition RJD on Saturday accused Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar of "institutionalising" corruption in the state and using government funds for electoral campaign ahead of the assembly polls.

It blamed the NDA government for "financial anarchy" in Bihar.

"Nitish Kumar is responsible for institutionalising corruption in Bihar... The CM is using state government funds for his party's poll campaign," RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav said.

He said that the 'Mahila Samvad' initiative to inform women about welfare measures was a part of the JD(U)'s electoral campaign "by using government funds".

The former deputy chief minister also hit out at the state government over "global tenders" for construction activities worth Rs 76,622-crore.

He also claimed that ministers in the state received hefty commissions in lieu of projects.

Yadav criticised the government over rising liabilities as it pays around Rs 25,000-30,000 crore annually as interest for loans. *—PTI*

UP: EVICTION NOTICES AGAINST DALITS SUSPENDED

HAPUR, 19 APRIL

The district administration in Hapur has temporarily suspended eviction notices targeting Dalit families living in homes provided under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) in Uttar Pradesh's Garhmukteshwar. This decision follows revelations that the land in question is recorded as a pond in government documentation, despite the Garhmukteshwar municipality having granted leases for residential plots back in 1986.

On 8 April, the Nagar Palika issued eviction notices to 41 residents, demanding they vacate their homes within 15 days. However, the Additional District Magistrate, Sandeep Kumar, confirmed on Saturday that these notices have now been revoked.

A three-member committee has been established to investigate the issue, expected to deliver a report within two weeks.

Residents of the Indira Nagar Colony, many of whom received leases after paying a fee in 1986, have presented these documents to contest the eviction. Over the last 35 to 40 years, families have settled in the colony. The eviction threats had pushed these families, comprising around 60-70 individuals, to the brink of homelessness. *—PTI*

ARTISAN SCHEME

TN rejects Centre's Vishwakarma, launches KTT

KANCHEEPURAM, 19 APRIL

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin launched the Kalaignar Kaivinai Thittam (KKT) on Saturday, an artisans development scheme named after former CM M Karunanidhi, rejecting the Centre's PM Vishwakarma Scheme in its present form.

Unlike the Vishwakarma Scheme, the DMK government's programme does not discriminate people on the basis of caste, but encourages caste inclusivity, the CM said at the launch of his government's version in Kundrathur here.

"The Vishwakarma Scheme encourages family-based professions by making the youth take up their ancestral trade without having to pursue higher studies. The government's duty should be to bring the youngsters to portals of learning and not discourage them from education or make them take up family trade," Stalin said.

The key changes, which the Centre declined to accept in amending the Vishwakarma Scheme, were incorporated in the KKT, especially increasing the minimum age of applicants to 35 years as against 18 in the Central scheme, and extending the benefits to all artisans interested in taking up the programme as against the Centre's initiative to cover caste or family-based trades.

"The Kalaignar Kaivinai Thittam was created to establish social justice and not discriminate on the basis of caste," Stalin, who handed over loan approval orders of Rs 170 crore along with a subsidy of Rs 34 crore to 8,951 beneficiaries, at the function held under the aegis of the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Department, said.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin during the launch of the Kalaignar Craft Project, in Kanchipuram district, Saturday. PHOTO: PTI

The scheme promotes 25 handicrafts and industries. Brick kiln work, pottery, alloy making, jewellery making, carpentry, sculpture, glasswork, musical instrument crafting, etc. are among the 25 traditional trades.

The KKT provides financial assistance, skill development, and entrepreneurship training to help artisans start new businesses or expand existing ones with modern approaches.

Under the scheme, eligible artisans can avail loans of up to Rs 3 lakh, with a 25 per cent subsidy (up to Rs 50,000) and an interest subsidy of up to 5 per cent.

The PM Vishwakarma Yojana was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 17 September, 2023. *—PTI*

Teen rapes eight-year-old neighbour in MP

BHIND, 19 APRIL

In Madhya Pradesh's Bhind district, a 17-year-old boy, a Class 10 student, allegedly raped his eight-year-old neighbour on Thursday evening. The young girl was alone at home when the accused, who lived nearby, forced his way in and assaulted her, said police. The child's screams alerted neighbours, who rushed to the scene and restrained the boy until police arrived. He was detained and later produced before a juvenile court. A case under the POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act) has been registered, and the teenager has been sent to a juvenile reform home. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Rajasthan braces for heatwaves, dust storms

JAIPUR, 19 APRIL

Heatwave conditions are expected in parts of Rajasthan, including the Jodhpur, Bikaner, Jaipur, Ajmer and Kota divisions, as well as the Shekhawati region, according to a Met official. The weather is likely to remain dry during the day. Ganganagar and Churu were the hottest locations over the past 24 hours, each recording a maximum temperature of 45.4°C — 7.6°C and 5.7°C above normal, respectively. Strong surface winds between 30–40 kph and dust storms are likely in the Jodhpur and Bikaner areas, said Radhey Shyam Sharma, director of the Jaipur Met Centre. Dust storms have already been recorded in Bikaner, and some areas received light rain. Heatwave and hot night conditions were observed in parts of the state. Pratapgarh recorded the highest minimum temperature at 31.1°C. *—PTI*

Chennai launches first AC electric train service

CHENNAI, 19 APRIL

Southern Railway launched its first air-conditioned Electric Multiple Unit (AC EMU) in the Chennai Division on Saturday, operating along the Chennai Beach–Chengalpattu corridor. Flagged off at 7am, the 12-car train offers Metro-like comfort with features including automatic doors, air suspension, stainless steel seating, CCTV, GPS-based displays, and regenerative braking that saves up to 35per cent energy. Manufactured by the Integral Coach Factory, the service aims to enhance commuter experience, especially during peak summer. Six services run six days a week (excluding Sundays) between Chennai Beach–Chengalpattu and Chennai Beach–Tambaram. Fares range from Rs 35 to Rs 105, with monthly passes between Rs 620 and Rs 2,115. First Class season tickets are not valid on these trains, which follow a separate fare structure. *—PTI*

Noida man drags dog behind his car for 3kms

NOIDA, 19 APRIL

A man has been arrested for allegedly tying a dog to his car and dragging it for three km in Greater Noida, police said on Saturday. According to the complaint by the dog's owner, Shoba Rani, the incident took place on Wednesday in the Nai Basti area. Rani said Amit's 10-year-old son threw a stone at her four-year-old German Shepherd, prompting the dog to bark. The boy fell, and in retaliation, Amit beat the dog with sticks, tied it to his car, and dragged it for three kms. The dog is critically injured. Rani's husband reported the matter to police. A case was registered and Amit was arrested on Friday and his car has also been seized. *—PTI*

Delhi's 'pancake collapse' felt 'like an earthquake'

Survivors and family members recount the shock and horror

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

11 people died and several others were trapped after the four-storey building collapsed at Shakti Vihar area, in New Delhi, on Saturday *PHOTO: PTI*

"It felt like an earthquake. The floor shook beneath us and before we could understand anything, everything was covered in dust," said Shiv Vihar local Ryan who lives next to the building that collapsed in northeast Delhi on Saturday morning.

Around 3am, a four-storey residential building in Gali No. 1, Mustafabad, came crashing down like a stack of cards, trapping several people under the rubble.

While some have been rescued alive, others were not so fortunate.

"We thought maybe something hit our house but when we looked out, the entire building next to us had turned to rubble," Ryan told PTI.

Sehjhad Ahmad lost two nephews, Danish and Naved, who stayed in a third-floor house with their parents -- Ahmad's sister and brother-in-law. "Both my nephews were the breadwinners of the family. They ran the entire household. Now they are gone," he said.

Sonu Abbas, another resident, said he lost his sister whose family was living on the fourth floor of the building. He told PTI that she was still alive when she was taken out of the rubble.

"She got up, saw that her husband and children were safe, and helped them out of the rubble," he said. Only after that she collapsed and passed away," Abbas said. Both her children have injuries while her husband remains in critical condition, he added.

Some residents claimed that the ongoing construction work on the ground floor where a new shop was reportedly being built might have triggered the collapse.

They also expressed concern about the structural condition of nearby buildings. There are around four to five buildings in a similarly fragile state, Salim Ali said.

"Wastewater from the sewer has been seeping into the walls of the buildings for years, and over time, the moisture has weakened the structure, causing the walls to absorb water and develop cracks," Ali claimed.

NDRF DIG Mohsen Shahidi said this was what is referred to as a "pancake collapse". It was a particularly dangerous type where chances of survival are minimal, he said. "Still, we hope there are lives that can be saved and we are actively searching." *—PTI*

The 500 MW Fast Breeder Reactor prototype at Kalpakkam. It aims to repurpose spent fuel from primary nuclear power *PHOTO: IADN CENTRE*

India's 1st fast-breeder reactor to be commissioned in 2026

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

- The Kalpakkam PFBR will be the first of its kind in India and is expected to propel India's nuclear programme. India targets a total capacity of 100 GW from the reactor

India's inaugural prototype fast-breeder reactor (PFBR) located in Kalpakkam, Tamil Nadu, is anticipated to be commissioned next year, following nearly two years of regulatory approval. This pivotal development will advance India's three-stage nuclear programme, designed to recycle spent fuel and mitigate radioactive waste.

The Kalpakkam PFBR, distinguished as the first of its kind in India, will employ plutonium-based mixed oxide fuel and utilise liquid sodium as coolant.

It aims to repurpose the spent fuel from the nation's primary nuclear power source, Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors. Developed by the Bharatiya Nabhikiya Vidyut Nigam (BHAVINI), the 500MW PFBR is in the advanced phases of integrated commissioning, with the first criticality scheduled for 2025-26.

Department of Atomic Energy officials said the plant's criticality could be achieved as soon as March 2025, with completion expected by September 2026.

India's government has set ambitious nuclear energy goals, aiming for a total capacity of 100 GW by 2031-32, up from the current 8.18 GW, with projects underway that would further augment this capacity substantially. *—PTI*

24 achieve 100 NTA score in JEE (Mains)

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

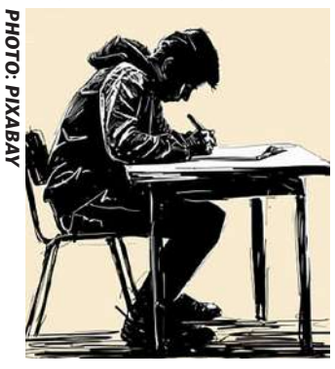


PHOTO: PIXABAY

The National Testing Agency (NTA) announced the results of the engineering entrance examination JEE (Main) on Saturday, revealing that 24 candidates achieved a remarkable perfect score of 100. Among the top scorers, seven hail from Rajasthan, while Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, and Maharashtra each contribute three. Additionally, Delhi, West Bengal, and Gujarat each have two candidates, with one each from Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Notably, two of the top performers are women.

Of the 24 high-achievers, 21 are from the General category, alongside one each from the Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC) categories. More than 992,000 candidates participated in the second edition of this vital exam, compared to 1.06 million for the first edition.

NTA officials clarified that the scores are normalised and do not directly equate to percentage marks.

However, the results of 110 candidates were withheld due to involvement in unfair practices. *—PTI*

Bhutan King visits International Multimodal Logistics Park in Assam

GUWAHATI, 19 APRIL

Bhutan King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuk on a day-long visit to Asam *PHOTO: PTI*

Bhutan King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuk arrived at Jogighopa in Assam's Bongaigaon district on Saturday to inspect India's first International Multimodal Logistics Park (MMLP).

The king was received by Assam Minister for Public Health and Engineering Minister, Jayanta Malla Baruah.

The king also visited the Inland Water Transport, which is under construction on the Brahmaputra river.

The MMPL, which will seamlessly integrate road, rail, air and waterways, is being constructed by the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited under the Bharatmala Project.

''Spread across 317 acres on the banks of the Brahmaputra, this project will unlock immense economic potential for our state by facilitating trade with neighbouring countries like Bhutan and Bangladesh,'' Baruah said.

"The strategic proximity of Bhutan's visionary urban development initiative, Gelephu Mindfulness City, will also contribute to the success of the park," he said.

Security has been tightened in and around the park, with local police and personnel from Bhutan deployed. *—PTI*

SC to hear plea on compensation to hate crime victims

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

The Supreme Court of India is set to hear a plea on 23 April seeking uniform compensation for victims of hate crimes and mob lynching. The petition, filed by Indian Muslims for Progress and Reforms, argues that the current system of granting payments is arbitrary and discriminatory, violating Articles 14, 15, and 21 of the Constitution.

The petition claims that compensation often depends on media attention, political motives, or the victim's religious identity, resulting in unfair and unequal relief. A bench comprising Justices BR Gavai and Augustine George Masih will hear the plea. *—PTI*

Badesatti becomes Chhattisgarh's first naxal-free panchayat

SUKMA, 19 APRIL

By becoming Naxal free, Badesatti can claim the Elvid scheme *PHOTO: X*

Badesatti in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district has officially become the state's first gram panchayat to declare itself Naxal-free, following the surrender of 11 insurgents on Friday. This milestone qualifies the village for development projects amounting to Rs 1 crore under the Elvid Panchayat Yojana, part of the Chhattisgarh Naxal Surrender/Victim Relief and Rehabilitation Policy-2025.

Local sarpanch Kalmu Joga shared the news, stating that the village had worked closely with police to encourage members connected to the banned outfit to abandon violence and reintegrate into society. A formal resolution declaring Badesatti as Naxal-free is expected soon.

Historically afflicted by Left Wing Extremism, Badesatti has seen significant development since the establishment of a Chhattisgarh Armed Force camp in 2021, leading to improved infrastructure such as roads and water supply systems. The village, home to around 1,700 residents, has previously experienced violence, including the murder of three alleged police informers by Naxalites in 2020.

With the recent surrenders, Badesatti is anticipated to benefit from government-improved infrastructure and social development initiatives aimed at eradicating Naxalism in the region. *—PTI*

Workers' nails pulled out, electrocuted on theft suspicions

KORBA, 19 APRIL

Two workers at an ice cream factory in Korba district were allegedly subjected to horrific torture by their employer and his associate, who suspected them of theft. The victims, Abhishek Bhambi and Vinod Bhambi, both hailing from Bhilwara district in Rajasthan, were employed via a contractor at the factory owned by Chhotu Gurjar.

On 14 April, following allegations of theft, Gurjar and his aide, Mukesh Sharma, reportedly stripped the men, administered electric shocks, and forcibly pulled out their nails. A disturbing video of the abuse has since gone viral. It shows a semi-nude individual receiving electric shocks and being beaten.

The victims managed to escape and where they filed a police complaint. -*—PTI*

Main accused in Kasganj gangrape arrested

KASGANJ, 19 APRIL

PHOTO: PIXABAY

The primary suspect in the gang rape of a woman has been apprehended following an encounter with police in Kasganj, Uttar Pradesh. The suspect, known as Yogesh alias Block Pramukh, was shot in the leg during the incident, which occurred on Friday night when police attempted to stop a suspicious motorcycle rider.

According to police reports, at approximately 10:30 pm, officers signalled Yogesh to pull over on Tatarpur Road. However, he fled the scene, firing at the police team in the process. Police returned fire in self-defence, wounding him. He has since been admitted to hospital for treatment.

Yogesh, 30, is one of ten individuals allegedly involved in the gang rape of a 16-year-old girl on 10 April. Police recovered a pistol, two live cartridges, two spent cartridges, a motorcycle lacking a number plate, and the victim's stolen earrings from the suspect.

On the day of the incident, the victim was with her 17-year-old fiancé at a canal after visiting the District Supply Officer's office.

Reports indicate she was raped by three men while her fiancé was robbed of cash and his phone was exploited for further funds through UPI. *—PTI*

OVER BRAHMIN REMARKS

Kashyap's family gets death and rape threats

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

Filmmaker Anurag Kashyap, who was a major controversy over a comment on the Brahmin community, claimed that his family and friends are receiving death and rape threats.

Kashyap had made the comment on the community in a reply to a social media user.

On Friday evening, the 52-year-old filmmaker posted a statement on Instagram, saying his comment has been "taken out of context".

"This is my apology, not for my post but for that one line taken out of context and the brewing hatred. No action or speech is worth your daughter, family, friends, and colleagues getting rape and death threats from the kingpins of sanskar," Kashyap said.

"I won't take back what I said. Abuse me all you want. My family didn't say anything. If you want an apology, here it is," he added. "Brahmins, please spare the women – even the scriptures teach this much decency. Decide for yourself what kind of brahmin you are."

In one of his comments, allegedly taken out of context, he said he would "pee on Brahmin", leading to an FIR against him in Mumbai

"At least look at the context before you write," he added.

Union Minister of State for Coal and Mines Satish Dubey, had called him a "vile scumbag", demanded a public apology.

Kashyap has been actively posting on social media over the release of 'Phule', a biopic on social reformers Jyotirao and Savitribai Phule.

The biopic, featuring Pratik Gandhi and Patralekhaa in the roles of the reformist couple, was set for release last week but it will now arrive in theatres on 25 April.

After the trailer of 'Phule' was unveiled online on 10 April, some members of the Brahmin community objected to the way they were portrayed. *—PTI*

Actor Tom Chacko arrested by Kerala police

KOCHI, 19 APRIL

PHOTO: PTI

The police on Saturday arrested Malayalam film actor Shine Tom Chacko in connection with a drug case. His arrest was recorded after about a four-hour-long interrogation in connection with an incident in which he allegedly fled from a hotel in Kochi during a narcotics raid.

He was booked under Sections 27 (consumption of any narcotic drug or psychotropic substance) and 29 (abetment and criminal conspiracy) of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

Chacko on Saturday appeared before the Kochi City Police for questioning in response to a formal notice issued by the police. On Wednesday night, Shine had escaped from his third-floor room, jumping out of the window onto a sheet covering the second floor. *—PTI*

HONOURING FLORIDA VICTIMS

A student places heart-shaped balloons near the Florida State University Student Union in Tallahassee as people pay tribute to the victims of a recent shooting. Two people were killed and six others injured after a 20-year-old man, identified by police as Phoenix Ikner, opened fire around lunchtime on Thursday near the student union building on the FSU campus
PHOTO: PTI

Trump retreats from vow to end Ukraine war in 24 hrs

Donald Trump's bold campaign promise to end the Russia-Ukraine war within 24 hours of taking office has undergone a significant transformation since his return to the presidency. Despite repeated vows during the 2024 campaign to broker a swift peace, Trump and his top officials have since adopted a more cautious tone, citing the complexities of the conflict and growing frustrations with Ukraine's leadership.

During the campaign trail, Trump repeatedly declared he would swiftly resolve the war. In March 2023, he told Fox News' Sean Hannity that there was "a very easy negotiation to take place," adding, "I will have it solved within one day." Speaking to CNN in May, Trump reaffirmed his claim: "They're dying, Russians and Ukrainians. I want them to stop dying. And I'll have that done — I'll have that done in 24 hours."

By August 2024, Trump was telling a National Guard Conference: "Before I even arrive at the Oval Office, shortly after I win the presidency, I will have the horrible war between Russia and Ukraine settled." Russia's UN Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia pushed back, saying, "The Ukrainian crisis cannot be solved in one day." Still, Trump's campaign spokesperson stated that negotiating an end to the war would be a top priority.

But since assuming office, Trump's language has softened. At a December 2024 news conference, he said only, "I'm going to try," when asked about brokering peace. In January 2025, retired Lt. Gen. Keith Kellogg—now serving as Trump's special envoy—suggested a 100-day target to end the war. That deadline expires on 30 April.

By the end of January, Trump announced "very serious" talks with Russia and said he and Putin might soon take "significant" steps. In February, Trump and Putin spoke for over an hour, followed by a call with Ukrainian

During a 28 February meeting in the White House, Donald Trump and JD Vance berated Volodymyr Zelenskyy as disrespectful and cancelled a planned minerals agreement
PHOTO: PTI

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. "I think we're on the way to getting peace," Trump said.

Yet tensions soon escalated. On 19 February, Trump called Zelenskyy a "dictator without elections" on Truth Social, while claiming only his administration could end the war. Just days later, during a 28 February meeting in the Oval Office, Trump berated Zelenskyy as "disrespectful" and cancelled a planned minerals agreement.

Declaring himself "in the middle," Trump blamed Zelenskyy's "hatred" for Putin as a stumbling block to peace. According to aides, Zelenskyy was asked to leave the White House shortly after Trump shouted at him. Trump later demanded an "immediate ceasefire" but expressed doubt over Zelenskyy's willingness to negotiate.

On 3 March, Trump paused military aid to Ukraine in a bid to pressure Kyiv into talks. Then on 14 March, he backtracked publicly for the first time, saying in an interview clip for Full Measure: "Well, I was being a little bit sarcastic when I said that... What I really mean is I'd like to get it settled, and I think I'll be successful."

That same month, Trump spoke separately with both Putin and Zelenskyy. Putin reportedly agreed not to target Ukrainian energy infrastructure, but refused a full 30-day ceasefire. Trump hailed the development as a step toward a "complete ceasefire." During a 19 March call with Zelenskyy, Trump suggested the US take ownership of Ukraine's power plants to secure them—an idea framed as American expertise supporting long-term stability.

By April, Trump began assigning blame across the board. "That's a war that should have never been allowed to start," he told reporters on 14 April. "Biden could have stopped it, Zelenskyy could have stopped it, and Putin should have never started it."

Then, on 18 April, Secretary of State Marco Rubio signalled that the US might soon abandon its mediation efforts. "We are now reaching a point where we need to decide whether this is even possible or not," Rubio said during talks in Paris. "Because if it's not, then I think we're just going to move on. It's not our war. We have other priorities."

He said a decision could come "in a matter of days," following another round of talks in London. Later that day, Trump echoed Rubio's urgency. "I have no specific number of days but quickly. We want to get it done," he told reporters. He added that "Marco is right," but stopped short of saying the US would pull out of the peace process.

"Well, I don't want to say that," Trump said. "But we want to see it end."

Trump's campaign rhetoric painted the war as easily solvable, but his administration now grapples with complex diplomatic challenges. As negotiations continue and frustration mounts, it remains unclear whether Trump's new approach will yield the peace he once promised could be achieved overnight. *—PTI*

SALAR سالار

4 centuries later, Easter's date still remains divisive

For more than 400 years, Catholic and Orthodox churches have used different ways to determine the date of Easter. But this Sunday will mark a special moment for Christians, as the churches celebrate of Jesus' resurrection on the same day.

What's more, top religious leaders — including Pope Francis — are expressing a desire to keep it that way. But the unusual alignment has stirred underlying mistrust between the two major Christian communions.

Calendars and calculations differ

The movable date for Easter follows a seemingly straightforward rule: the Sunday following the first full moon on or after the spring equinox. But the two churches started using different calendars after Pope Gregory XIII's adaptation in 1582, when the Western church adopted the Gregorian calendar while the Eastern Orthodox Church kept the older Julian one.

Moreover, each church uses its own ecclesiastical calculations for lunar cycles and the equinox, which don't neatly match scientific projections.

The result is that Easter dates can be as much as five weeks apart. They can coincide in back-to-back years, or a decade can pass without it happening.

Pope Francis' wish

Days before his five-week hospitalisation, Pope Francis referred to this year's Easter celebration while invoking the 1,700th anniversary of the historic Council of Nicaea, when Christian leaders gathered to settle foundational disputes about the faith.

"Once again, I renew my appeal: Let this coincidence serve as a sign — a call to all Christians to take a decisive step toward unity around a common date for Easter," Francis said while leading prayers at the Basilica of St. Paul in Rome.

Francis' invitation, delivered at the end of a prayer for Christian Unity with Orthodox priests present, wasn't new. Returning from a trip to Turkey in 2014, he told reporters on the plane that a unified date would be logical.

"It is a bit ridiculous," he said, then staged a pretend conversation: "Tell me, your Christ, when is he resurrected? Next week? Mine was resurrected last week.'"

He has found an ally in Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, a fellow octogenarian and spiritual leader of the world's Orthodox Christians. The two "speak to one another like brothers," Francis has said.

For his part, Bartholomew has called Francis "our elder brother" and described the Easter initiative as "a real step toward repairing old conflicts".

Only winners, no losers?

The idea of a common Easter has been discussed since the 1960s, with interest often peaking when celebrations coincide. The key obstacle has always been the implication that one side would need to concede.

Protestants, who follow the same calendar as Catholics, have also been in on the discussions.

The Geneva-based World Council of Churches — a fellowship of Orthodox and Protestant bodies — has proposed a compromise. It suggests using modern astronomy, basing the calculation on Jerusalem time and following the same basic rule set centuries ago.

"It has never been more important than now, because we live in a polarized world and people all over the world yearn for more unity," Lutheran Bishop Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, a senior WCC official, told The Associated Press from his home outside Berlin.

"All other questions – on calendar, on time, on the moon and the stars and everything – it's not primary; it's secondary."

Strings attached

While the pope's wishes may carry powerful influence through the Vatican's highly centralised authority, Bartholomew's role is largely symbolic over the self-governed national and local churches.

And discussions between Russia, the Orthodox world's most populous country, and churches of other Orthodox-majority countries remain stalled due to the war and church divisions in Ukraine.

Further complicating prospects for consensus is a history characterized by centuries of mistrust, largely driven by wariness in the East about the Vatican's supremacy.

At a Holy Week service Monday in Athens, Father Anastasios welcomed parishioners into the Church of Saint Dimitrios Loumbardiaris, a restored stone chapel near the Acropolis. He said he supports forging bonds with Christianity's other branches — but with caution.

"We can try to build bridges, but we cannot distort our faith or the traditions of our ancestors, or the dogmas Christ himself handed down," he said. "There are deeply rooted differences. From my view and that of many people here, the unity sought in the past by the Roman Catholic Church often wasn't sincere; it came with strings attached, was more about dominance than genuine reconciliation." *—PTI*

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, the spiritual leader of the world's Eastern Orthodox Christians leads the service of the Holy Passion in Turkey ahead of Easter
PHOTO: PTI

LETTERS write to us at salar@salar.news

Google loses case as US court rules firm is illegally monopolising ads

Tech giant Google has just suffered another legal blow in the United States, losing a landmark antitrust case. This follows on from the company's loss in a similar case last year.

Social media giant Meta is also currently embroiled in a landmark legal battle in the US that could change not only how it operates, but how millions of people around the world communicate.

Hearings in the Meta case commenced earlier this week in a court in Washington DC, after Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg failed to settle the case for USD 450 million.

Brought by the US Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the suit alleges Meta broke antitrust laws and illegally secured a monopoly over social media platforms.

Along with Google and Meta, Amazon and Apple are also currently facing significant antitrust challenges in the US.

All of these actions are continuing despite major changes in both the FTC and the US Department of Justice as a result of the election of Donald Trump.

Collectively, these cases represent a substantial regulatory push to examine and potentially curb the market power of big tech. So what are all of these cases about exactly? What are the next steps in each of them? And what might they mean for consumers?

The cases against Google

The case Google just lost was related to online advertising.

The US Department of Justice alleged Google had behaved anti-competitively to monopolise the complex digital advertising technology market. This market facilitates the buying and selling of online ads.

The US district judge, Leonie Brinkema, agreed Google has a monopoly over the tools used by online publishers to host ad space, and the software that facilitates transactions between online publishers and advertisers.

In her ruling, Judge Brinkema said Google had "wilfully engaged in a series of anticompetitive acts" which ultimately resulted in it obtaining "monopoly power in the open-web display publisher ad server market".

Google has said it will appeal the decision. The Department of Justice will ask the court to require Google to divest parts of its ad tech business when the remedies phase of this trial starts later this month.

The second case involving Google is related to internet search.

The Department of Justice argued Google used exclusionary agreements, such as paying Apple billions annually to

The Department of Justice will ask the court to require Google to divest parts of its ad tech business when the remedies phase of this trial starts later this month
PHOTO: PTI

be the default search engine on iPhones, to lock out competitors.

In August 2024, a federal judge ruled Google acted illegally to maintain its search monopoly.

The case has now moved to the remedies phase. A crucial remedies trial is scheduled to begin next week.

During this, the court will hear arguments on what actions should be taken against Google.

Potential remedies could be significant, with regulators previously suggesting measures such as restrictions on Google's Android operating system or even forcing the sale of its Chrome browser.

Google has stated its intention to appeal this ruling as well.

The case against Meta

The FTC's case against Meta alleges the tech giant illegally maintained a monopoly in the market for "personal social networking services".

The core of the FTC's argument is that Meta employed a "buy-or-bury" strategy to eliminate competitive threats.

This allegedly involved acquiring nascent rivals, most notably Instagram in 2012 and WhatsApp in 2014, specifically to neutralise them before they could challenge Facebook's dominance.

The FTC points to internal communications as evidence of anticompetitive intent.

These include Mark Zuckerberg's statement, "It is better to buy than compete".

They also include an internal memo which showed Zuckerberg considered spinning off Instagram in 2018 over concerns about antitrust scrutiny.

The commission argues Meta's actions stifled innovation and harmed consumers by limiting choices. It's seeking to force Meta to divest, or sell off, both Instagram and WhatsApp.

Meta vigorously defends its actions. It argues it does not hold a monopoly, facing fierce competition from platforms such as TikTok, YouTube and X (formerly Twitter).

The company contends the acquisitions of Instagram and WhatsApp were pro-competitive, allowing Meta to invest billions to improve and scale the apps, ultimately benefiting users. A key defence point is that the FTC itself reviewed and approved both deals over a decade ago.

The trial is expected to last eight weeks.

The cases against Apple and Amazon

In March 2024, the Department of Justice, along with several states, sued Apple, alleging it illegally maintains a monopoly in the smartphone market.

The lawsuit claims Apple uses its control over the iPhone ecosystem to stifle competition and innovation by, for example, degrading messaging quality between iPhones and Android devices and limiting the functionality of third-party digital wallets and smartwatches.

Apple filed a motion to dismiss the case in August 2024. The litigation is in its early stages and is expected to continue for several years.

In September 2023, the FTC, joined by numerous states, also sued Amazon.

The lawsuit alleges the tech giant unlawfully maintains monopoly power in both the market for "online superstores" (where consumers shop) and "online marketplace services" (for third-party sellers).

The FTC claims Amazon uses interlocking anticompetitive tactics.

These include punishing sellers for offering lower prices elsewhere, coercing sellers into using its services, degrading search results with excessive ads, and charging exorbitant seller fees.

In late 2024, the presiding judge largely denied Amazon's attempt to dismiss the core federal claims, allowing the case to proceed. A trial is currently scheduled for October 2026. *—PTI*

US FAVOURS RUSSIAN CONTROL OVER CRIMEA

Pact includes immediate ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine

WASHINGTON, 19 APRIL

The United States is ready to recognise Russian control over Crimea as part of a peace agreement between Russia and Ukraine, the CNN reported.

The peace proposal includes an immediate ceasefire between the two countries. The framework was shared with the Ukrainian and European officials in Paris on Thursday.

A phone call regarding this proposal also took place between US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, CNN reported, quoting sources.

However, there are some pieces that still need to be filled out, and the US is planning to work with Europe and Ukraine on that next week in London, the source said.

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Russia annexed Crimea in 2014 following a military invasion – a move widely condemned as illegal by the international community.

Meanwhile, President Donald Trump also signalled the US may "take a pass" on its efforts to broker a peace deal between Russia and Ukraine if either side makes negotiations too difficult, CNN reported.

"If one of the two parties makes it very difficult, we're just going to say, 'You're foolish, you're foolish. You're horrible people,' and we're just going to take a pass," Trump said.

Despite the warning, Trump expressed cautious optimism about securing a deal, CNN reported.

Meanwhile, Ukraine imposed sanctions on three Chinese companies on Friday, claiming that they were involved in the production of advanced Iskander missiles. *—PTI*

Vance in Vatican after rebuke on migrants

VATICAN CITY, 19 APRIL

US Vice President JD Vance is meeting with the Vatican No 2 official, following a remarkable papal rebuke of the Trump administration's crackdown on migrants and Vance's theological justification of it.

Vance, a Catholic convert, is due to meet Saturday with the Vatican secretary of state, Cardinal Pietro Parolin. There was speculation he might also briefly greet Pope Francis, who has begun resuming some official duties during his recovery from pneumonia.

Vance was spending Easter weekend in Rome with his family and attended Good Friday services in St. Peter's Basilica on Friday after meeting with Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni.

Francis and Vance have tangled sharply over migration and the Trump administration's plans to deport migrants en masse. *—PTI*

US court blocks deportations

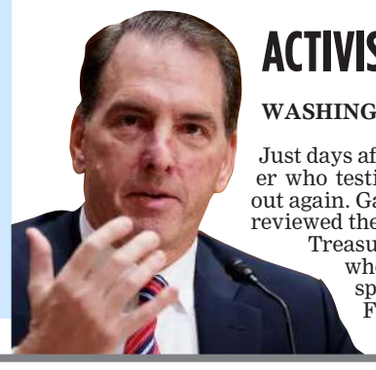
WASHINGTON, 9 APRIL

The Supreme Court on Saturday temporarily blocked deportations of any Venezuelans held in northern Texas under an 18th century wartime law. In a brief order, the court directed the Trump administration not to remove Venezuelans held in the Bluebonnet Detention Centre "until further order of this court".

The high court acted in an emergency appeal from the American Civil Liberties Union contending that immigration authorities appeared to be moving to restart removals under the Alien Enemies Act of 1798.

Two federal judges refused to step in and the US 5th Circuit Court of Appeals has yet to act.

The American Civil Liberties Union on Friday unsuccessfully filed emergency petitions with both the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals and the US Supreme Court itself to halt the deportations. *—PTI*



ACTIVIST FAULKENDER IS ACTING IRS CHIEF

WASHINGTON, 10 APRIL

Just days after being promoted to acting IRS commissioner, the whistleblower who testified publicly about investigations into Hunter Biden's taxes is out again. Gary Shapley, who previously testified to Congress as Republicans reviewed the business dealings of Joe Biden's son, will be replaced by Deputy Treasury Secretary Michael Faulkender, according to the three people, who were not authorised to speak publicly about the move and spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity. Faulkender will be the fourth IRS leader. *—PTI*

TRUMP'S LETTER SENT BY 'MISTAKE'

WASHINGTON, 19 APRIL

Top officials from the Donald Trump administration told Harvard University that a controversial letter sent to the institution last week was issued without proper authorisation. The letter said Harvard officials faced a series of highly intrusive demands regarding the university's hiring practices, admissions procedures and academic curriculum, reported The New York Times. *—PTI*

Starmer, Trump hold 'productive' talks on trade deal

LONDON, 19 APRIL

British PM Keir Starmer and US President Donald Trump held "productive" talks on a potential UK-US trade deal amid ongoing US import tariffs. The leaders discussed efforts to resolve Trump's 10% tariff on UK goods and the 25 per cent tariff on cars, steel, and aluminium. Starmer reaffirmed his support for free and fair trade. The call also covered global security issues, including the Russia-Ukraine conflict and recent US strikes on a Yemeni port targeting Houthi rebels. Trump mentioned a potential second State Visit to the UK in September, though it's yet to be confirmed. UK Chancellor Rachel Reeves will visit Washington next week for G7, G20, and IMF meetings. *—PTI*

5.9 magnitude quake jolts Pak, Jammu & Kashmir

ISLAMABAD, 19 APRIL

Pakistan was jolted by a 5.9 magnitude earthquake on Saturday at 11.47am. No loss of life and property has been reported. According to the National Seismic Monitoring Centre, the epicentre was located near the Afghanistan-Tajikistan border region. The quake also shook Jammu and Kashmir, officials said, but said no loss of life or damage to property was reported. Tremors were felt across a wide region of Pakistan, . This was the second quake in a week after a 5.5 intensity tremor shook Pakistan's capital and parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab provinces last Saturday. *— PTI*

Canadian drummer held for child sexual abuse

LOS ANGELES, 19 APRIL

Joseph Seiders, drummer for Canadian indie rock band The New Pornographers, has been arrested and charged with possessing child sex abuse materials, authorities said. Seiders, 44, is accused of recording young boys with his phone at a Chick-fil-A restaurant bathroom in Palm Desert, California, according to the local sheriff's department. Law enforcement responded to a 7 April report of suspicious activity at the fast food restaurant. An 11-year-old boy told them a man recorded him while he was using the bathroom there. Two days later, officers received another report at Chick-fil-A and took Seiders into custody. They searched his home and found evidence connecting him to the two incidents. *—PTI*

Hezbollah not to bow until Israel gives in

BEIRUT, 19 APRIL

The leader of Lebanon's militant Hezbollah group Naim Kassem said on Friday that its fighters will not disarm as long as Israeli troops remain in southern Lebanon and the Israeli air force regularly violates Lebanese air space. Since the ceasefire went into effect in late November, Israel has still conducted airstrikes and according to the UN high commissioner for human rights at least 71 civilians, including 14 women and nine children, have been killed by Israeli strikes .

Kassem spoke hours after two separate Israeli drones killed two people in southern Lebanon.

"Does anyone expect us to discuss a national defence strategy as warplanes fly over our heads and there is occupation in south Lebanon," Kassem asked. "These are not discussions. This is surrender. Let Israel withdraw first and stop its flights in the air."

Kassem said Hezbollah had implemented its commitments related to the US-brokered ceasefire that halted the fighting in Hezbollah's latest, 14-month war with Israel, to help Gaza. *—PTI*

Iran, US discuss Tehran's nuke plans

ROME, 19 APRIL

Iran and the US resumed high-stakes negotiations in Rome on Saturday over Tehran's advancing nuclear programme, officials confirmed. The closed-door talks are being held at the Omani Embassy in the Camilluccia neighbourhood and come amid heightened tensions in the Middle East.

The negotiations are being led by US Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff and Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, with mediation by Omani Foreign Minister Badr al-Busaidi. Both Witkoff and Araghchi travelled ahead of the talks—Witkoff from Paris and Araghchi from Moscow, where he met Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The dialogue marks a significant moment given the decades of US–Iran hostility following the 1979 Islamic Revolution. In 2018, President Trump withdrew from the 2015 nuclear deal, which had curbed Iran's uranium enrichment in exchange for sanctions relief.

The talks could determine whether the US or Israel considers military action to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons, or whether diplomacy prevails. Trump said Friday, "I'm for stopping Iran, very simply, from having a nuclear weapon."

Iran is seeking a deal to stabilise its faltering economy. Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei said Tehran remains committed to diplomacy "with open eyes" despite challenges.

Meanwhile, Iran Air has received two long-sought Airbus A330s, raising questions over US export controls due to American-made components in the aircraft.

The negotiations follow escalating regional conflict, including the Israel-Hamas war and recent US airstrikes that killed over 70 Houthi rebels in Yemen. *—PTI*

Second round of US-Iran nuclear talks will be held in Rome on Sunday under Omani supervision, Muscat's FM confirms **PHOTO: X**

Yemen will not back down

Yemen's Houthis rebels have vowed to continue their military operations against Israel and the United States following deadly airstrikes on the Ras Isa oil port that killed at least 74 people, CNN reported. "Yemen will not back down from continuing its support operations for the Palestinian people until the Israeli aggression on Gaza stops and the siege is lifted," the Houthi-controlled armed forces in Yemen said in a statement, reported the CNN. *—ANI*

Israeli strikes on Gaza kill 90 in 48 hours

Mourners carry the bodies of people killed in an Israeli airstrike in Khan Younis **PHOTO: PTI**

DEIR AL-BALAH, 19 APRIL

More than 90 people have been killed in Gaza by Israeli strikes in the last 48 hours, Gaza's Health Ministry said on Saturday.

The ministry does not differentiate between civilians and combatants.

The dead include at least 15 people killed overnight, with women and children among them, some of who were sheltering in a designated humanitarian zone, according to hospital staff.

Israel is ramping up attacks across Gaza as it tries to pressure Hamas to release its hostages and disarm.

Israel has said it plans to occupy large "security zones" inside Gaza. *—PTI*

Death toll in Congo boat crash rises to 148

KINSHASA, 19 APRIL

The death toll in a boat crash in Congo after it caught fire earlier this week rose to 148 from 50 with more than 100 still missing, officials said Friday

Rescue teams saved dozens with bad burns however the search for the missing continues supported by the Red Cross and provincial authorities.

The motorized wooden boat that had left the port of Matankumu for Bolomba territory with about 400 passengers caught fire near the town of Mbandaka, Compétent Loyoko, the river commissioner, told The Associated Press.

The death toll rising, Sen Jean-Paul Boketsu Bofili of Equateur province on Friday said, "As we speak, more than 150 survivors suffering from third-degree burns are without humanitarian assistance." Authorities struggle to enforce rules as boat accidents are common due to late-night travels and overcrowding. *—PTI*

GUN VIOLENCE

Stray bullet kills Indian student in Canada

NEW YORK, 19 APRIL

A 21-year-old Indian student was killed in Canada after she was struck by a stray bullet as she was waiting at a bus stop on her way to work and shots were fired by a car occupant.

According to local police Harsimrat Randhawa, a student at Mohawk College in Hamilton, Ontario was an innocent victim, fatally struck by a stray bullet during a shooting incident involving two vehicles.

The Consulate General of India in Toronto said in a post on X Friday, "We are deeply saddened by the tragic death of Indian student Harsimrat Randhawa in Hamilton, Ontario."

"A homicide investigation is currently underway. We are in close contact with her family and are extending all necessary assistance. Our thoughts and prayers are with the bereaved family during this difficult time." officials said.

- Through collected video, investigators have determined that a passenger of a black car fired at the occupants of a white sedan. Shortly after the shooting, the vehicles left the scene

Hamilton Police in a statement said that at around 7.30 pm local time, it received reports of a shooting near Upper James and South Bend Road streets in Hamilton. When police arrived, they found Randhawa with a gunshot wound to the chest. She was rushed to a hospital, but succumbed.

Through collected video, investigators have determined that a passenger of a black car fired at the occupants of a white sedan. Shortly after the shooting, the vehicles left the scene.

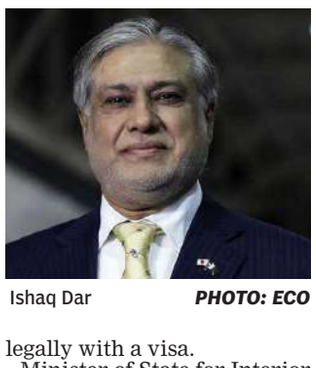
Shots from the shooting incident also entered the rear window of a residence nearby where the occupants were watching television a few feet away. No one was injured in the home, police said.

Investigators are asking anyone with dashcam or security camera footage between 7.15 pm and 7.45 pm near the shooting area to contact authorities and provide any information that can help further the investigation. *—PTI*

Harsimrat Randhawa, a student at Mohawk College in Hamilton

PAK FIRM ON RETURNING AFGHAN REFUGEES AS DY PM VISITS KABUL

ISLAMABAD, 19 APRIL



Ishaq Dar **PHOTO: ECO**

Pakistan ruled out any extension of the April 30 deadline for relocation of Afghan refugees ahead of Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar's visit to Kabul on Saturday to reset frayed ties between the two countries.

A high-level delegation accompanying Dar who is also foreign minister and his parleys would meet top leadership of Taliban, cover the entire gamut of Pak-Afghan relationship, focusing on ways and means to deepen cooperation in all areas of mutual interests, including security, trade, connectivity, and people-to-people ties.

The trip came as a drive against illegal Afghan refugees intensified, with Pakistan making it clear that the only way for Afghans to stay in the country was to have entered legally with a visa.

Minister of State for Interior Tallal Chaudhry on Friday said the process of deportation of Afghan citizens and illegal immigrants under the second phase of the 'One-Document Regime' was underway, while the third phase involving deportation of Afghans already approved for relocation to third countries would start from April 30. *—PTI*

PHOTO:X

Pomegranates from Maharashtra reaches US market

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

In a significant advancement for India's fresh fruit exports, the inaugural sea shipment of Indian pomegranates from Maharashtra has successfully arrived in the United States. The Ministry of Commerce & Industry announced that the prized Bhagwa variety was well received in New York, praised for its exceptional quality and vibrant appearance. Traditionally, Indian pomegranates have been exported by air, but this landmark sea shipment, which includes 4,620 boxes (14 tons), represents a more cost-effective and sustainable method. *—PTI*

Network18 Media Q4 net loss at ₹29.09 crore

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

Network18 has declared a consolidated net loss of Rs 29.09 crore for the March quarter, with revenue from operations at Rs 561.32 crore. In the same period last year, it reported a significant loss of Rs 195.68 crore and revenue of Rs 2,792.45 crore, though direct comparisons are complicated by the merger of its subsidiary, Viacom18, with Star India. The company highlighted a substantial loss of Rs 1,435.79 crore related to derecognition of net assets and goodwill, impacting overall results. Standalone revenue for the quarter was Rs 521.76 crore, slightly down from Rs 535 crore a year previously, with net losses rising to Rs 69.48 crore. The advertising environment remains subdued, especially in the TV news sector, which experienced a 15 per cent decline in inventory consumption. *—PTI*

NTT DATA, partners with T'gana for ₹ 10,500cr unit

HYDERABAD, 19 APRIL

NTT DATA, a prominent IT services firm, and Neysa Networks, an AI-centric cloud platform provider, signed a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Telangana government to develop an AI Data Centre Cluster in Hyderabad, involving an investment of Rs 10,500 crore. The agreement was formalised in Tokyo during Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's official visit to Japan. The new facility will house a 400 MW data centre cluster equipped with 25,000 GPUs, supporting advanced AI supercomputing capabilities. CM Reddy highlighted Telangana's advantageous policies and infrastructure that make it a prime location for AI-focused developments. *—PTI*

Just Dial FY25 net profit rises 61% to ₹584 crore

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

Just Dial, the local search engine, has announced a remarkable 61 per cent year-on-year increase in net profit for FY25, totalling Rs 584.2 crore. The company's revenue for the fiscal year amounted to Rs 1,141.9 crore, marking a growth of 9.5 per cent over FY24. In the January-March quarter of FY25, Just Dial recorded a profit of Rs 157.6 crore, with quarterly revenue at Rs 289.2 crore, reflecting a 7 per cent increase from the same period last year. Driving this growth were strategic merchant acquisition initiatives that enhanced the company's presence in urban and semi-urban markets. The platform attracted 191.3 million unique visitors in Q4, an 11.8 per cent increase year-on-year, while total business listings reached 48.8 million. Shwetank Dixit, Chief Growth Officer, emphasised the firm's commitment to sustained value for users, merchants, and shareholders as it enters FY26. *—PTI*

RBI to stay agile, proactive: Guv Malhotra

'Market at the cusp of transformation but not immune to the volatile environment'

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

Reserve Bank Governor Sanjay Malhotra has said that the central bank will continuously monitor the rapidly evolving global situation and remain 'agile and proactive' in its policy actions.

Noting that the Indian economy and the financial markets have demonstrated remarkable resilience, Malhotra cautioned that "they are not immune to the vagaries of an uncertain and volatile global environment."

"In view of the rapidly evolving situation, especially on the global front, we are continuously monitoring and assessing the economic outlook. We will be agile and proactive in our actions on the policy front, as always," he said, while addressing the 24th FIMMDA-PDAI Annual Conference in Bali on Friday.

He said the growth-inflation balance has improved significantly and there has been a decisive improvement in headline inflation which is projected to remain aligned to the target of 4 per cent in FY26.

- Malhotra said the growth-inflation balance has improved significantly and there has been a decisive improvement in headline inflationwhich is projected to remain aligned to the target of 4 per cent in FY26

"Even though we have projected a somewhat lower real GDP growth for FY26 at 6.5 per cent, India is still the fastest growing economy. Yet, it is much below what we aspire for. We have reduced repo rates twice and provided sufficient liquidity," he said.

On the Indian financial markets, the Governor said all market segments including FX, G-sec, Money Markets, have largely remained stable.

"Fair treatment of customers and transparency in forex pricing for the smaller and less sophisticated customers continues to engage our attention. Much more can be and needs to be done here. Divergence in pricing in FX markets for the small and large customers are far wider than what can be justified by operational considerations," he said.

The Reserve Bank has recently announced that access to FX Retail will also be provided through the Bharat Connect platform.

"We also continue to see banking channels being used for activities on unauthorized FX trading platforms. This calls for greater vigilance and stronger efforts by banks to create awareness among their customers about the perils of using such platforms," he said.

"Today, financial markets stand at a cusp of transformation between global and domestic headwinds, unprecedented opportunities and growing public expectations," Malhotra said. *—PTI*

RBI's gold reserve triples to ₹6.8 lakh cr

MUMBAI, 19 APRIL

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) reported a sharp rise in the value of its gold reserves for the week ending 11 April, reflecting a global surge in gold prices.

According to data released by the RBI on Friday, the value of the central bank's gold holdings has tripled over the past year, highlighting a significant increase in its gold purchases during this period.

The value of RBI's gold holdings surged by Rs 11,986 crore during the week ending 11 April. As of that date, the total value of the RBI's gold reserves stands at Rs 6,88,496 crore. This increase comes at a time when central banks across the world are stepping up their gold purchases amid growing economic and geopolitical uncertainties. *—PTI*

Trade pact with US reportedly includes 19 chapters

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

The terms of references (ToRs) finalised by India and the US for the proposed bilateral trade agreement include around 19 chapters covering issues such as goods, services and customs facilitation, official sources said.

To give further impetus to the talks, an Indian official team will visit Washington next week to iron out differences on certain issues before formally launching negotiations for the proposed India-US bilateral trade agreement (BTA).

India's chief negotiator, Department of Commerce Additional Secretary Rajesh Agrawal, will lead the team for the first in-person talks between the two countries.

Agrawal was appointed as the next commerce secretary on April 18. He will assume office from 1 October.

The three-day Indian official team's talks with the US counterparts in Washington will start from 23 April, the official said. The visit follows senior official-level talks held between the two countries last month here.

Brendan Lynch, the Assistant US Trade Representative for South and Central Asia, was in India from 25 to 29 March for crucial trade discussions with Indian officials.

The two sides are keen to utilise the 90-day tariff pause, announced by US President Donald Trump on 9 April.

On 15 April, Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal had said that India will try to close the negotiations as quickly as possible with the US. *—PTI*

₹8500 crore FPI inflow boosts investment despite shorter trade

MUMBAI, 19 APRIL

Despite a shorter trading week due to holidays, foreign investors poured in around Rs 8,500 crore into Indian equities, the National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL) data revealed.

The Indian stock markets saw positive foreign portfolio investment (FPI) inflows during the week, even though trading happened only on three days.

The fresh inflows signal a comeback of foreign investors, who were selling for some months in the equity segment.

As the dollar declines and the Indian rupee strengthen, it becomes more attractive and easier for FPIs to shift their investments from the US to India.

Aashish P Sommaiyaa, executive director and CEO of WhiteOak Capital said, "The positive fallout of the USA tariff scenario is that it comes with declining dollar and relative strengthening of emerging market currencies like rupee, making it easier for FPIs to allocate money out of USA into markets like India."

It also gives the Reserve Bank of India leeway to run easier monetary and credit conditions.

However, overall FPI activity in April remains negative with a net Rs 23,103 crore being pulled out from Indian equities. A total net outflow of Rs 1,39,677 crore from the equity market has been predicted this year. *—ANI*

Telcos say no to Mumbai Metro rates for services

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea told Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation that it would not be possible for them to provide In-Building Solutions at "unviable rates" offered by MMRCL's selected partner ACES.

The matter pertains to providing IBS at Mumbai Metro, including underground stations and associated tunnels.

The MMRCL said: "It would not be possible for us to provide IBS services at unviable rates offered by your selected partner ACES." —PTI

Diagnostics industry set for 14% growth

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

India's diagnostics industry is expected to grow at a strong pace of 14 per cent compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) over the next five years, a PhillipCapital report stated.

This growth will be driven by several key factors such as increased healthcare spending, an ageing population, higher income levels, rising awareness of preventive testing, wider availability of advanced diagnostic tests, increased penetration of health insurance and central government initiatives to strengthen healthcare infrastructure.It said, "The Indian diagnostics industry CAGR is estimated at 14 per cent over FY23-28, fuelled by an increase in healthcare spending driven by an ageing population, rising income levels."

- This growth will be driven by several key factors such as increased healthcare spending, an ageing population, higher income levels and rising awareness of preventive testing

The organised diagnostic players will grow faster than the rest of the sector as they are better equipped with more advanced and efficient services compared to their unorganised counterparts. They will also benefit from faster consolidation taking place across the industry.

Organised diagnostic chains account for just 15 per cent of the total market share. Hospital-based laboratories have a 37 per cent share, while unorganised standalone labs' share is 48 per cent.

India's diagnostics sector remains under-penetrated compared to global standards. India lags far behind than other developing nations in the number of tests conducted per person each year. *—ANI*

Tata Motors achieves record patent filings ahead of demerger

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

Tata Motors, the prominent automotive firm poised for a significant demerger this year, has set a remarkable record in fiscal year 2025, announcing substantial achievements in intellectual property. The company recently revealed it has filed an impressive 250 patents and 148 design applications, marking the highest annual patent filings in its history. Additionally, Tata Motors submitted 81 copyright applications and received 68 patent grants, bringing its total granted patents to 918.

These filings span a wide range of innovations, focusing on key automotive megatrends including Connectivity, Electrification, Sustainability, and Safety (CESS), as well as advancements in emerging technologies like Hydrogen-Based Vehicles and Fuel Cells.

Areas of innovation also include vehicle systems such as battery technology, powertrain, and emission control.

In recognition of its intellectual property prowess, Tata Motors received five accolades in FY 2025, both domestically and internationally.

The company has announced a crucial shareholder meeting on 6th May 2025, aimed at securing approval for the highly anticipated demerger. Eligible shareholders will maintain proportional shareholdings in both future entities, with each shareholder receiving one share of Tata Motors Commercial Vehicles (TMLCV) for every share held in Tata Motors (TML). *—PTI*

INDIAN TELECOM TARIFFS SET FOR INCREASE BY END OF 2025

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

Indian consumers may face higher telecommunications bills as major operators, including Bharti Airtel, Reliance Jio, and Vodafone Idea (Vi), plan to implement tariff hikes by December 2025. An analysis by global brokerage firm Bernstein suggests that these companies could raise prices by 10 to 20 per cent, marking the fourth significant increase in six years. The last hike occurred in July 2024, when tariffs surged by up to 25 per cent, driven by the increasing capital demands associated with expanding 4G and 5G networks.

Bernstein forecasts mid to high-teen revenue growth for Airtel and Jio between 2025 and 2027, supported by steady subscriber gains and rising Average Revenue per User (ARPU). While Vi grapples with financial challenges, government intervention has converted its spectrum dues into equity shares, thereby strengthening its position.

The report anticipates a 15 per cent tariff rise in December, followed by annual hikes through to 2033. While tariff adjustments are expected to become more regular, their scale may be less dramatic compared to previous years. *—Agencies*

SELLING DEATH

UP loses hundreds of crores in insurance scam

LUCKNOW, 19 APRIL

Police filed an 800-page chargesheet against the 'insurance mafia' in Uttar Pradesh's Sambhal for a scam involving hundreds of crores. The 11 accused allegedly created fraudulent life insurance policies using names of dying people, or even people who had already died. The policies were used to siphon money from leading insurance companies including ICICI Prudential, PNB MetLife, Bajaj Allianz and SBI Life Insurance.

In many of the frauds, the accused would pass terminally-ill patients to insurance firms as healthy individuals. The accused would allegedly pay the premiums themselves but reap the rewards of the claims. Many of their targets were people from disadvantaged backgrounds

"In certain cases, they would offer the deceased's' family a small sum of the money. In others, the families were left completely unaware and were uncompensated," Sambhal ASP Ankruti Sharma said.

In some cases, the gang also managed to forge backdated policies for people who had already died.

The scam first reported by Times of India, showed the sinister methods through which the gang operated. In one case, a person who died of cancer was insured six months after death. The accused took policies from two companies, falsely presenting the deceased as alive and admitted to another hospital where the person later was declared dead due to cardiac arrest. The accused managed to forge a death certificate on this basis, allowing them to claim the insurance.

Sharma said on Friday, "The 800-page chargesheet, filed on Thursday, has every detail of the evidence collected from 17 January when an SUV was intercepted in Sambhal and unexplained cash in large quantity along with PAN cards, debit cards, etc, were found in it. That led to unearthing of the scam, spread across 12 states. As of now, we've named 11 accused, including Omkareshwar Mishra (Varanasi); Surajpal, Shahrukh Khan from Sambhal; and Shivendra Kumar from Bihar, in the chargesheet. Since it is an ongoing investigation, there are many others who are on the run or under the radar. Their names will be included in supplementary chargesheets." *—Agencies*

NCIB scam victims push for revival or merger

THANE, 19 APRIL

Depositors of scam-hit New India Co-operative Bank (NCIB) met RBI-appointed advisors and senior officials of the apex bank, demanding a concrete roadmap for the bank's revival or merger and better protection for depositors' interests.

The NICB Depositors' Foundation is demanding urgent measures to restore depositor confidence and alleviate the financial strain faced by thousands of account holders since RBI imposed restrictions on 13 February, 2025.

Mumbai Police has so far arrested eight persons in connection with the Rs 122 crore New India Cooperative Bank embezzlement case.

The foundation president TN Raghunatha said a delegation of depositors met RBI-appointed advisors Ravindra Chavan and Ravindra Sapra at the bank's corporate office in Prabhadevi on Friday.

- The NICB Depositors' Foundation is demanding urgent measures to restore depositor confidence and alleviate the financial strain faced by thousands of account holders since RBI imposed restrictions on 13 February, 2025

The advisors offered a cautiously optimistic outlook on the bank's future, Raghunatha stated. "The advisors were positive about the prospects of reviving the bank. They confirmed that multiple options, including a potential merger, were being explored, though specifics could not be shared at this stage," he said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

There's good depth in Indian hockey: Fulton

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

Impressed with the talent on show at the National Championship, Indian men's hockey team chief coach Craig Fulton on Saturday said the country has great depth, but the players' ability to adapt to new tactics quickly will be key, going forward. He emphasised that the next 18 months will be crucial for creating a squad with sufficient bench strength. Fulton, who closely monitored the recently concluded Nationals, highlighted the competitiveness of the matches when the top teams clashed. "When we put strength on strength, the games were very, very close.—*PTI*

PHOTO: X

Jannik Sinner regains top form after a doping ban

DUBAI, 19 APRIL

FWorld number one Jannik Sinner may take time to hit his stride on his return from a three-month doping ban next month, but will be in top form when he heads to the French Open, Italy's Davis Cup captain Filippo Volandri said. Sinner has not played since winning the Australian Open at the start of the season. He accepted a ban in February following a deal with the World Anti-Doping Agency, which had challenged a tribunal's decision to clear him after two positive tests. The 23-year-old's ban will end on May 4 and he will make a return at the Rome Masters that begins three days later. His national team captain believes Sinner will hit top gear, though, only in time for the year's second Grand Slam, which starts on 25 May. "His physical preparation is focused on Roland Garros. It's a gruelling event with long, best-of-five-set matches.—*PTI*

Crispin names 39 probables for AFC Asian Cup 2026

DUBAI, 19 APRIL

A list of 39 probables for the Indian senior women's team camp was announced by head coach Crispin Chettri on Saturday. The Blue Tigresses are set to play the AFC Women's Asian Cup 2026 Qualifiers in Chiang Mai, Thailand, from 23 June to 5 July. India has been drawn in Group B, where it will face host Thailand, Mongolia, Timor Leste, and Iraq. The senior women's team camp will commence on May 1, 2025, at the Padukone-Dravid Centre for Sports Excellence in Bengaluru. —*PTI*

Lucknow is known for its sporting culture: Rajnath

LUCKNOW, 19 APRIL

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Saturday said Lucknow is known for its sporting culture, having hosted India's first National Games in 1948, and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath should now make efforts to organise the next edition of the sporting event here.Speaking at the 'Saansad Khel Mahakumbh' at the KD Singh Babu stadium here, he said, "We take sports very seriously. Today, our government is making every effort to organise the Olympic Games in 2036 in Gujarat, while efforts are also being made to host other world-class games in India.—*PTI*

Buttler, Rutherford knock helps GT beat DC by 7 wickets

Prasidh-led (4/41) Gujarat pacers limit Delhi to 203/8

AHMEDABAD, 19 APRIL

Jos Buttler braved cramps to rustle up a tempestuous unbeaten 97 to guide Gujarat Titans to a wonderful seven-wicket win over Delhi Capitals here on Saturday.

But Buttler batted around them with collectedness in the company of Rutherford (43) until the left-hander was dismissed in the penultimate over.

After the impressive Prasidh Krishna-led (4/41) Gujarat pacers limited Delhi to 203/8, the home side paced their chase impeccably to reach 204/3 in 19.2 overs as Buttler played the protagonist role during his 54-ball innings. There were mini-hiccups for the Titans in the form of early dismissals of skipper Shubhman Gill and B Sai Sudharsan (36), who helped Buttler add 60 runs for the second wicket.

Just as the South African, who was dropped on 30 by Rashid Khan off his bowling, was gaining in confidence, he chose to play a reverse paddle off Siraj, only to be caught by Prasidh at short third man.

The Karnataka pacer returned to get rid of Axar as he continued to dig the ball into the pitch to get some bounce and grip to keep the batters guessing.

Sharma (37, 19b) played some beefy shots as they crossed the 200-run mark.

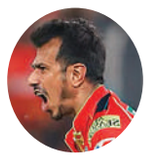
But Buttler batted around them with collectedness in the company of Rutherford (43) until the left-hander was dismissed in the penultimate over.

The English-West Indian pair milked 119 runs for the third wicket that pushed GT closer to the shore. —*PTI*

Jos Buttler 97 not out powers GT to a dominant win over DC **PHOTO: PTI**

> Not a typical Chinnaswamy wicket, and we're slow on learning as well
>
> -Josh Hazlewood, RCB pacer

> Yuzvendra Chahal one of the best bowlers in the Indian Premier League
>
> -Shreyas Iyer, Punjab Kings captain



> CSK might try out new players if it doesn't go well in next couple of games
>
> -Stephen Fleming, Chennai Super Kings head coach

Abhishek Nayar returns to KKR

Abhishek Nayar, who was recently removed as India's assistant coach, has joined Kolkata Knight Riders' support staff team, the IPL side announced on Saturday, but his exact role and position have not been specified.

"Welcome back home, Abhishek Nayar," KKR posted on X, confirming his re-entry into the team setup. Nayar was part of the KKR support staff as assistant coach and mentor when they lifted their third IPL title in 2024, a decade after their previous triumph in 2014. He also played a pivotal role in player development at the KKR Academy. In an earlier post, KKR revealed that he was back as assistant coach, but soon deleted it from X.

RCB eye a better batting effort in clash against PBKS

MULLANPUR, 19 APRIL

PHOTO: PTI

Royal Challengers Bengaluru have very little time to pick up the pieces after a debilitating loss. They eye a much-improved display from their batting unit in a return Indian Premier League match against in-form Punjab Kings here on Sunday.

Except for Tim David, the RCB batters had a night to forget as they slipped to 95 for nine against PBKS in Bengaluru on Friday, losing the match by five wickets.

In a rain-curtailed 14-over-a-side match, the RCB batters cut a sorry figure with Phil Salt, Virat Kohli, skipper Rajat Patidar, and Liam Livingstone failing miserably in front of their home crowd.

Patidar acknowledged the batters' failure at the Chinnaswamy Stadium.

Initially, it was sticking and two-paced, but we could have done far better as a batting unit. Partnerships are important said after the loss against Punjab Kings.

Come Sunday, and RCB, who are placed fourth in the points table, would bank on Salt and Kohli to provide an explosive start, and the onus would be on Patidar, Livingstone, Jitesh Sharma, Krunal Pandya, and David to lend stability in the middle-order.

On the bowling front, Josh Hazlewood and Bhuvneshwar Kumar will be spearheading the attack, but they will need a lot more support from people like Yash Dayal, Krunal, and Suyash Sharma.

Despite their third loss at home, Hazlewood sought to look at the positives. —*PTI*

RCB VS PBKS

HEAD TO HEAD

PLAYED:	34
PBKS Won:	18
RCB Won:	16

LSG vs SRH Match starts at **3.30 pm IST**

Mumbai Indians against CSK in IPL Clasico

MUMBAI, 19 APRIL

Chennai Super Kings' poor form may take the sheen off the return leg of this year's IPL Clasico, but for Mumbai Indians, the contest will present a challenge to change strategy to maintain their winning run here on Sunday.

Mumbai Indians have done well to resurrect their faltering campaign with two consecutive wins over Delhi Capitals and Sunrisers Hyderabad, but Hardik Pandya's seventh-placed side still needs to steer through mid-table traffic with several other teams in a similar situation.

Mumbai Indians were spot on with their planning and execution on a tricky pitch here at the Wankhede Stadium, on which they took apart SRH's explosive batting style with precision.

That surface, an uncharacteristic one for Wankhede, had turn and grip for spin as well as pace off the ball for seamers, which took the fight out of SRH batters.

But such an approach against the spin-heavy CSK would not be the right way and has the potential to backfire.

Noor Ahmad has thrived in CSK colours with 12 wickets in seven matches, which includes his three wickets against MI earlier this season, while the five-time winners also have two seasoned exponents in Ravichandran Ashwin (5 wickets) and Ravindra Jadeja (4). —*PTI*

MI VS CSK

HEAD TO HEAD

PLAYED:	38
CSK Won:	20
MI Won:	18

CSK vs MI Match starts at **7.30 pm IST**

ANCELOTTI RULES OUT MADRID RIFT, WON'T TALK FUTURE

MADRID, 19 APRIL

Carlo Ancelotti has eluded speaking about his future after recent reports that again linked the Real Madrid coach with a move to Brazil's national team.

The veteran Italian manager was asked several times by reporters on Saturday at a pregame press conference if he would leave the Spanish giant this summer, and each time he responded that he didn't want to speak about it.

"At the end of the season, we will speak about this with the club," he said more than once.

The 65-year-old Ancelotti is under contract with Madrid through June 2026.

Speculation regarding his career plans has once again spiked after Madrid's exit from the Champions League this week. Britain's Sky Sports has reported that he will step down following the Copa del Rey final against Barcelona on 26 April. Besides the Copa del Rey, Madrid is still in the fight to defend its La Liga title and is also set to play in the Club World Cup this summer.

Madrid is in second place behind Barcelona in the league. It hosts fourth-place Athletic Bilbao on Sunday.

Brazil has reportedly been after Ancelotti since last year as it seeks an elite coach for the 2026 World Cup. —*PTI*

BARCELONA OPEN

Rune soars past Khachanov in SFs

BARCELONA, 19 APRIL

Holger Rune crushed Karen Khachanov 6-3, 6-2 on Saturday to reach the Barcelona Open final. World number 13 Rune, who dispatched defending champion Casper Ruud in style on Friday, outclassed his opponent in the first set without conceding a break point.

The 21-year-old Dane broke to love in the seventh game and then broke again in the ninth to claim the first set in little over half an hour. Khachanov, ranked 27th, suffered another break in the second game of the second set, with Rune consolidating for a 3-0 lead.

The Russian, 28, saved two break points in the sixth game but Rune broke again in the ninth, wrapping up his victory with a passing shot to reach the final for the first time."It was a very good match from my side, I played very smart, I think, and put him under lots of pressure," said Rune.

Denmark's Holger Rune returns the ball against Russia's Karen Khachanov **PHOTO: X / @HOLGERRUNE2003**

Alcaraz sets Rune a clash in a blockbuster final

Carlos Alcaraz further showcased his versatility and tactical nous on Saturday at the Barcelona Open Banc Sabadell, where he surged into the championship match.

The top seed tamed the windy conditions and a heavy-hitting Arthur Fils 6-2, 6-4 to extend his winning streak to nine matches. Alcaraz saved the only break point he faced in the 76-minute clash, according to Infosys ATP Stats, en route to reaching his third ATP Tour final of the season (also Rotterdam, Monte-Carlo).

"The first thing we have to be grateful for is the sun," Alcaraz said with a smile when asked about the conditions. —*PTI*

Veer, Anahat reach finals of Squash WC

KUALA LUMPUR, 19 APRIL

Veer Chotrani and Anahat Singh advanced to the finals of the World Championship Qualifying Event (Asia) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on Saturday.

The second-seeded Chotrani prevailed 3-1 (11-7, 11-6, 7-11, 11-4) against Chi Him Wong, his eighth-seeded opponent from Hong Kong, China. The Indian will be up against Ameeshenraj Chandaran, the third seed from Malaysia, in the final.The 17-year-old Anahat, seeded fifth, took down Helen Tang, eighth seed from Hong Kong, China, 3-0 (11-2, 11-7, 11-6). She will face Hong Kong, China's Toby Tse in the summit clash after the latter's 3-1 (11-3, 12-10, 10-12, 11-8) win over Akanksha Salunkhe in the second semifinal. —*PTI*

Pakistan team won't travel to India

LAHORE, 19 APRIL

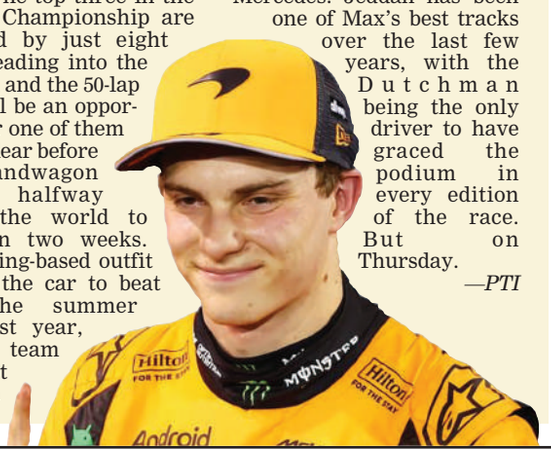
Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Mohsin Naqvi on Saturday announced that their women's team will not travel to India for the ICC ODI World Cup later this year and play their matches at a neutral venue, following the hybrid model accepted earlier this year.When Pakistan hosted ICC Champions Trophy recently, BCCI had refused to send Indian team across the border due to diplomatic tension between the two nations and their matches were held in Dubai.A hybrid model was agreed upon that allowed both India and Pakistan to play their matches at neutral venues if one of the two countries was to host an ICC event."Just like India didn't play in Pakistan in the Champions Trophy and were allowed to play at a neutral venue, whatever venue is decided, we will play. When there is an agreement, it has to be adhered to," he said. The PCB chief said India and ICC, being the hosts of the tournament. —*PTI*

SAUDI ARABIA GP

McLaren duo remains favourite

LONDON, 22 JAN

McLaren's Oscar Piastri has been the most successful driver in the year so far, bagging impressive wins in Bahrain and China. The Australian trails his teammate and championship leader, Lando Norris, by three points, largely due to the unfortunate trip through the grass during his season-opening home race, which relegated him to ninth on the day. Nestled in third in the driver's standings is defending champion Max Verstappen, whose impressive win at Suzuka ensured that he remains in the conversation for a fifth title despite the car's struggles this season. An atypical chill, gentle breeze invited the paddock to the Jeddah Corniche circuit ahead of the Saudi Arabia Grand Prix weekend. The street circuit will play host to the last race of the Asian triple-header, the fifth race of what is turning out to be an enterprising Formula One season. The top three in the Driver's Championship are separated by just eight points heading into the weekend, and the 50-lap affair will be an opportunity for one of them to steer clear before the bandwagon shifts halfway around the world to Miami in two weeks. The Woking-based outfit has had the car to beat since the summer break last year, and the team has swept to an early lead in the Constructors' standings, enjoying a 58-point cushion over second-placed Mercedes. Jeddah has been one of Max's best tracks over the last few years, with the Dutchman being the only driver to have graced the podium in every edition of the race. But on Thursday. —*PTI*



Nikola Pokrivac dies in car accident at age 39

ZAGREB, 19 APRIL

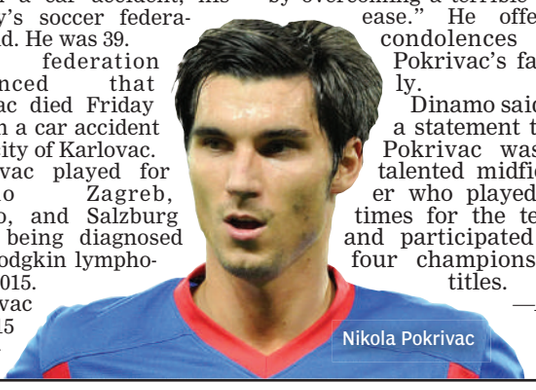
Nikola Pokrivac, a former Croatia national team midfielder who played at the 2008 European Championship, has died in a car accident, his country's soccer federation said. He was 39.

The federation announced that Pokrivac died Friday night in a car accident in the city of Karlovac.

Pokrivac played for Dinamo Zagreb, Monaco, and Salzburg before being diagnosed with Hodgkin lymphoma in 2015.

Pokrivac made 15 appearances for Croatia's national team. Marijan Kustic, president of the Croatian Football Federation, called Pokrivac a "great football player" who "showed great courage in life by overcoming a terrible disease." He offered condolences to Pokrivac's family.

Dinamo said in a statement that Pokrivac was a talented midfielder who played 69 times for the team and participated in four championship titles. —*PTI*



Nikola Pokrivac